



**Annual Report of the ASEAN  
Intergovernmental Commission  
on Human Rights (AICHR)**

JULY 2024–JUNE 2025





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on Human Rights (AICHR): July 2024–June 2025

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)  
was established on 8 August 1967.

The Member States are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia,  
Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines,  
Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

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# Abbreviations

<b>ACTIP</b>	ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
<b>ACWC</b>	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
<b>AHRD</b>	ASEAN Human Rights Declaration
<b>AICHR</b>	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
<b>AMM</b>	ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting
<b>AMS</b>	ASEAN Member States
<b>ASB</b>	ASEAN sectoral body
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>ASOEN</b>	ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment
<b>AUN-HRE</b>	ASEAN University Network–Human Rights Education
<b>CPR</b>	Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN
<b>CRC Asia</b>	Child Rights Coalition Asia
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>FYWP</b>	Five-Year Work Plan
<b>NHRI</b>	National human rights institution
<b>RSO of the Bali Process</b>	Regional Support Office of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SEANF</b>	Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum
<b>SOMTC</b>	Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN CRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>WGAHRM</b>	Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism

# 2025 AICHR Annual Report Summary

In the midst of writing this report on 26 May 2025, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Leaders made history by signing the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on *ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future* and correspondingly adopted the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045 “Resilient, Innovative, Dynamic, and People-Centred ASEAN”* along with its Strategic Plans. It is stated that our future ASEAN will be an ASEAN Community that is:

- able to project ASEAN position on regional and global issues (paragraph 13);
- an inclusive and cohesive Community that respects political, social, religious, cultural, ethnic diversities, which upholds the principles of democracy, rule of law and good governance, and respects fundamental freedoms, promotes and protects human rights, and promotes social justice (paragraph 19); and
- a Community anchored on ASEAN Centrality with enhanced institutional capacity and effectiveness, with ASEAN organs, bodies and mechanisms that are more decisive, responsive, and timely as well as future-ready in addressing global and regional challenges (paragraph 41).

To achieve these goals, two key paragraphs of the Vision on ASEAN institutions stand out. They are relevant to the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in guiding our work and direction. First, ASEAN endeavours to continue strengthening its institutions and *refreshing* its processes to be more resilient, innovative, agile, adaptive, responsive, and decisive in addressing increasing cross-cutting issues (paragraph 8). Second, ASEAN needs to *strengthen* its institutional capacity and effectiveness, which includes arriving at decisions on situations in a timely manner, promoting greater synergy and

coordination in cross-pillar and cross-sectoral issues, optimising work processes, effective mobilisation of resources, and strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat (paragraph 10).

After 15 years, marked by initial socialisation and mobilisation work by AICHR, 2025 marks a significant year for AICHR as it moves to deepen and advance the promotion and protection of human rights through two proposed ASEAN declarations: the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment; and the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development.

These proposed declarations reflect the unique regional context and priorities of ASEAN Member States (AMS), emphasising both the interdependence of peace and development, and the importance of environmental sustainability in the promotion and protection of human rights. The proposed declarations will give an opportunity for AICHR to develop ASEAN-owned and ASEAN-led Regional Plans of Action to follow up on.

Further, it would be remiss not to mention the reality of continuing threats to peace in the region due to escalating tensions. As such, given that conflict prevention and protection of the people are of utmost priority on ASEAN’s agenda, AICHR has embarked on a series of human rights training workshops to deliberate on approaches and pathways to peace in ASEAN.

Today, AICHR has 30 civil society organisations (CSOs) with consultative status, and there has been an increasing number of applicants recently. This shows a consistent interest in engaging with the Commission.



AICHR Representatives have been diligent in updating the Commission regularly through the sharing of information, reporting on new initiatives and recent developments on human rights in AICHR meetings and additionally, through the annual ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue. Notably, AICHR issued a press release on the devastating earthquakes in Myanmar and Thailand on 2 April 2025.

The upcoming AICHR Five-Year Work Plan (FYWP) commences in 2026. Fifteen years after AICHR's establishment, we are looking at a new phase of AICHR's programming to promote and protect human rights in the region. AICHR's long-term programmatic perspective needs to allow AICHR to be responsive, relevant, agile, innovative, decisive and future-ready in addressing regional human rights challenges in accordance with the *ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future* and the ASEAN principles of consensus, unity, and Centrality.

Between January 2010 to December 2024, AICHR conducted 155 activities, covering a range of 40 thematic issues, through the implementation of three FYWPs since 2010. Further, throughout the period, there has been a significant increase in AICHR's activities from one year to the next.

To align efforts to strengthen AICHR's capacity and enhance its effectiveness consistent with the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045*, there is a pressing need for AICHR's work to be impactful, with meaningful and tangible outcomes, through its adaptability, flexibility, inclusivity and being even-handed in the promotion and protection of human rights. Importantly, ASEAN Leaders have called on our institutions to be more decisive, responsive, and timely as well as future-ready in addressing challenges, and AICHR intends to meet this call.

At the start of 2025, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) requested AICHR to consider the *Information Paper on the Work of the AICHR 2010–2024*, prepared by the ASEAN Secretariat, and report back to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers on the outcomes of its discussions. Some observations are contained in this report.

With this, AICHR is proud to present and share its 2025 Annual Report pursuant to Article 6.6 of AICHR's Terms of Reference.

Dated this 7<sup>th</sup> day of July 2025



**Malaysia:**

H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon (May 2024–present)  
*AICHR Chair 2025*

**Brunei Darussalam:**

H.E. Ajman bin Haji Meludin (January 2025–present)  
H.E. Hajah Nor Hashimah Haji Mohammed Taib (January 2020–December 2024)

**Cambodia:**

H.E. Keo Remy (January 2022–present)

**Indonesia:**

H.E. Anita Ashvini Wahid (January 2025–present)  
H.E. Yuyun Wahyuningrum (January 2019–December 2024)

**Lao PDR:**

H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy (January 2022–present)

**Myanmar:**

H.E. U Nyunt Swe (July 2024–present)

### **Philippines:**

H.E. Severo S. Catura (April 2025–present)

H.E. Angelito A. Nayan (May–December 2024)

### **Singapore:**

H.E. Eugene Tan Kheng Boon (January 2025–present)

H.E. Shashi Jayakumar (January 2019–December 2024)

### **Thailand:**

H.E. Bhanubhatra Jittiang (January 2025–present)

H.E. Amara Pongsapich (January 2019–December 2024)

### **Viet Nam:**

H.E. Ambassador Nguyen Trung Thanh (January 2025–present)

H.E. Ambassador Nguyen Thai Yen Huong (January 2019–December 2024)



# 1

## Introduction

AICHR commemorated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024, marking a decade and a half of sustained efforts in promoting and protecting human rights throughout the ASEAN region. Since its inauguration on 23 October 2009 at the 15<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Cha-Am Hua Hin, Thailand, AICHR has served as a cornerstone of ASEAN's institutional commitment to pursue forward-looking strategies to strengthen regional cooperation on human rights. The November 2012 adoption of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) and the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the AHRD was a landmark achievement that further strengthened this foundation, aligning AMS around a common set of human rights principles.

As the overarching human rights body of ASEAN, AICHR has been instrumental in cultivating a stronger regional human rights culture through inclusive dialogues, policy advocacy, and public education. Prioritising groups in vulnerable situations and emerging threats and challenges, AICHR has addressed critical issues such as gender equality, child rights, disability inclusion, migrant protection, human rights and the environment, and corporate accountability. By initiating collaborative platforms and capacity-building initiatives, AICHR continues to promote a cohesive and inclusive approach that integrates human rights into ASEAN's broader agenda for regional cooperation and sustainable development.

In conjunction with AICHR's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the ASEAN Secretariat prepared an *Information Paper on the Work of the AICHR 2010–2024*, to provide an overview of AICHR's work since its inception, as well as information on its progress, achievements and challenges. The *Information*

*Paper* evaluates AICHR's accomplishments across the 14 mandates set out in AICHR's Terms of Reference.

A review of AICHR's activities from 2010 to 2024 reveals that from January 2010 to December 2024, AICHR conducted 155 activities, covering a range of 40 thematic issues through the implementation of three FYWPs.

Challenges persist. AICHR faces a significant implementation gap between its ambitious work plans and deliverables. The disparity between planned initiatives and achievable outcomes raises concerns about how AICHR has been effectively translating its activities into action. The *Information Paper* by the ASEAN Secretariat provided considerations for AICHR to further fulfil its mandates, which can be taken into account by AICHR in its development of its workplans and priority programmes.

In 2024, AICHR was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy, Representative of Lao PDR to AICHR. Leadership was subsequently assumed by H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, Representative of Malaysia, who serves as the AICHR Chair for 2025.

As of 15 June 2025, AICHR comprised the following Representatives:

Brunei Darussalam:  
H.E. Ajman bin Haji Meludin

Cambodia:  
H.E. Keo Remy

Indonesia:  
H.E. Anita Ashvini Wahid



Lao PDR:

H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy

Malaysia:

H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon

Myanmar:

H.E. U Nyunt Swe

Philippines:

H.E. Severo S. Catura

Singapore:

H.E. Eugene Tan Kheng Boon

Thailand:

H.E. Bhanubhatra Jittiang

Viet Nam:

H.E. Ambassador Nguyen Trung Thanh

This Annual Report provides an overview of AICHR’s work and direction between 1 July 2024 and 15 June 2025. It details AICHR’s key meetings and activities, efforts to mainstream human rights across the three pillars of the ASEAN Community, and the ongoing thematic work in advancing specific rights. It also

highlights institutional-strengthening initiatives; AICHR’s efforts at engagement with ASEAN organs and entities, CSOs, and external partners; and the participation of Timor-Leste in AICHR’s meetings and activities, as Observer.

Aligned with Malaysia’s ASEAN theme of “Inclusivity and Sustainability”, the human rights areas for the year include peace, human rights and the environment, sustainable development, and inclusive growth. This year, AICHR remains committed to championing an ASEAN-led, ASEAN-owned, and whole-of-ASEAN approach to enhance its work in mainstreaming and integrating human rights into the broader ASEAN agenda.

Looking ahead, this report outlines key observations on achievements and challenges during the term, alongside strategic actions to guide AICHR’s future direction, with a focus on strengthening institutional effectiveness and deepening regional cooperation.

This report is submitted to the AMM in accordance with Article 6.6 of AICHR’s Terms of Reference.

## 2

# Work of AICHR

### 2.1 AICHR Meetings

During the reporting period, AICHR held five meetings.

#### 2.1.1 Special Meeting 1/2024

AICHR convened its Special Meeting 1/2024 on 23–26 July 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy, Representative of Lao PDR to AICHR, and was attended by AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat. Timor-Leste attended the Meeting as Observer.

The Meeting was updated on recent developments on human rights in the region, including new laws and regulations at the national level related to human rights, and human rights initiatives by AMS as presented by AICHR Representatives of Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore.

During the Meeting, the implementation of AICHR's Priority Programmes / Activities, including business and human rights, the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, trafficking in persons, youth debate on human rights, prevention of torture, and implementation of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations, among others, were discussed. The Meeting deliberated initiatives to enhance the engagement of AICHR with ASEAN sectoral bodies (ASBs) and stakeholders. Discussions on the FYWP 2026–2030 also commenced.

On 24 July 2024, AICHR Representatives had their annual Interface with the AMM during the 57<sup>th</sup> AMM and Related Meetings. The Interface saw candid exchanges between the Ministers / Deputy Ministers and AICHR Representatives on the progress and ongoing efforts to promote and protect human rights in the region. The AICHR Chair delivered AICHR's Statement and submitted AICHR's Annual Report 2024 to the 57<sup>th</sup> AMM.

AICHR Representatives also held their annual Interface with the Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn. Parties shared views and deliberated on AICHR's ongoing work to advance human rights cooperation and dialogue in ASEAN.

On 25 July 2024, AICHR met with the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group and expressed appreciation for working to draft the proposed ASEAN environmental rights framework. AICHR's meeting with the Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum (SEANF) saw the sharing of experiences on referral modalities to protect human rights in the region.

#### 2.1.2 Special Meeting 2/2024

AICHR convened its Special Meeting 2/2024 on 13–15 November 2024 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy, Representative of Lao PDR to AICHR, and was attended by AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat. Timor-Leste attended the Meeting as Observer.

AICHR received updates on recent human rights developments across ASEAN, including new national laws and regulations as presented by AICHR Representatives from Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Singapore. Recent developments across the three ASEAN Community pillars, such as on the sustainability agenda, climate change, and digitalisation, were also highlighted.

The Meeting discussed the implementation of AICHR's Priority Programmes and Activities for 2024 and 2025 with a particular focus on the right to development, the right to peace, the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities, human rights and policing, prevention of torture, combatting trafficking in persons, business and human rights, and matters concerning rights of migrant workers and youth engagement, among others. During its deliberations, AICHR reiterated the importance of strengthening cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration to address growing challenges in the region and effectively support ASEAN Community-building initiatives.

AICHR deliberated on the outline and timeline for the development of the AICHR FYWP 2026–2030 and discussed the modalities of a working group established by AICHR. To ensure the continuity of AICHR's work, AICHR discussed arrangements for a Transition Workshop between the outgoing AICHR Representatives (2022–2024) and incoming AICHR Representatives (2025–2027), to take place in early 2025.

On 14 November 2024, AICHR held its first meeting with the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (RSO of the Bali Process), aimed at exploring synergies and identifying areas of mutual interest for potential cooperation.

The Meeting commended the successful 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue held on

5 November 2024 in Jakarta, co-chaired by Indonesia and Lao PDR. It was the second Dialogue since the adoption of the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on the ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue in 2023.

The Meeting concluded with a handover ceremony of the AICHR Chairmanship from Lao PDR to Malaysia. The Meeting expressed appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy and the national Secretariat for excellent arrangements and leadership as the Chair of AICHR in 2024 and welcomed Malaysia as the incoming Chair of AICHR in 2025.

### **2.1.3**

#### **40<sup>th</sup> Meeting and Retreat**

AICHR convened its 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting and Retreat on 11–14 February 2025 in Langkawi, Malaysia. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, Representative of Malaysia to AICHR, and attended by AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat. Timor-Leste attended the Meeting as Observer.

The Chair highlighted the ASEAN 2025 theme of “Inclusivity and Sustainability” and emphasised the need for an ASEAN-led, ASEAN-owned, and whole-of-ASEAN approach to advance peace, the right to development, inclusive growth and sustainable development. Inclusivity requires that groups in vulnerable and marginalised situations are not only heard but actively engaged in decisions that affect their lives. These communities must be empowered to participate in, contribute to, and equitably enjoy and benefit from the economic, social, cultural, and political developments within ASEAN countries. Sustainability, in turn, demands full recognition and respect for human rights and the environment, whereby development that meets present needs does not compromise the dignity, rights, and well-being

of future generations, and their ability to meet their needs. A sustainable future can only be possible through the adoption of a rights-based approach that safeguards both people and the planet.

At this Meeting, the implementation of the FYWP 2021–2025 and its 2025 Priority Programmes / Activities with a particular focus on thematic areas such as human rights and the environment, business and human rights, digital rights, countering human trafficking and violent extremism, rights of persons with disabilities, right to development, and implementation of human rights treaties that AMS are parties to, among others, were discussed.

AICHR also deliberated on the proposed ASEAN declaration related to the right to a safe, clean and sustainable environment towards progressing it as tasked by the AMM in its 57<sup>th</sup> Meeting's Joint Communique 2024. In addition, Malaysia introduced a proposal for an ASEAN Declaration to Promoting Peace, Inclusive Growth, Sustainable Development and the Right to Development, aligned with the theme of Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship 2025.

The Meeting received updates from AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives on recent human rights developments of some AMS, including new national laws, regulations and initiatives.

AICHR also adopted the Thematic Study on the Right to Peace, led by Lao PDR, and agreed for the report to be made available on the AICHR website as well as other outcome reports of AICHR programmes. The peace study can inspire the work for peace with a higher mission to advance a culture of peace and human rights.

On institutional matters, AICHR discussed the overall assessment of its work over the past

15 years and AICHR's past self-assessments. These discussions aimed to formulate recommendations to the AMM on AICHR's future priorities for the next five years.

A Retreat among AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives deliberated various AICHR priority areas during Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship 2025, including the proposed ASEAN declaration related to the right to a safe, clean and sustainable environment.

In parallel, the Working Group for the AICHR FYWP convened its first meeting on 11 February 2025, agreeing on a revised timeline for its meetings and to preliminarily populate the indicative activities for the new FYWP. Updates were presented to AICHR.

Preceding the 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting of AICHR, AICHR held a Transition Workshop on 10 February 2025, themed "Building Better and Stronger, and Staying Relevant, Inclusive, Innovative and People-Centred", to facilitate the transition of outgoing AICHR Representatives (2022–2024) and incoming AICHR Representatives (2025–2027).

#### **2.1.4 Special Meeting 1/2025**

AICHR convened its Special Meeting 1/2025 on 8–10 April 2025 in Penang, Malaysia. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, Representative of Malaysia to AICHR, and attended by AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat. Timor-Leste attended the Meeting as Observer.

At this meeting, AICHR hosted the inaugural Interface Consultation with the ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN) and had a frank and constructive exchange of views on the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the



Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment. Following that, AICHR agreed on the text of the proposed declaration.

AICHR continued its deliberation on the development of the FYWP 2026–2030. As part of this process, findings from the final review of the FYWP 2021–2025 were presented. Discussions also covered preparations for the 2026 Priority Programmes / Activities of AICHR.

AICHR further deliberated on the text of the proposed ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development.

AICHR discussed progress of the implementation of its priority programmes and activities, covering the rights of children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, youth engagement, mental health in the digital age, business and human rights, environmental sustainability, the right to development, the right to peace, trafficking in persons, and people smuggling.

AICHR also deliberated on operational and institutional matters, including communications

received by AICHR. Measures to strengthen collaboration with ASBs and entities across the three ASEAN Community pillars were discussed, including the identification of human rights thematic areas for follow-up work. Further, AICHR considered plans to undertake a self-assessment of its work and progress since its establishment in 2009.

AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives briefed the meeting on recent developments in their respective countries, which included addressing such issues as online scamming, trafficking in persons, transnational crime, death penalty, gender equality, engagement with the United Nations (UN) and the UPR mechanism, and the devastating earthquake that struck Myanmar and Thailand on 28 March 2025. Representatives welcomed the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Impact of the Earthquake in Myanmar on 28 March 2025 and the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Outcome of the Special Emergency Meeting in the Aftermath of the Earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand on 30 March 2025. AICHR also expressed its deepest sympathies and solidarity with the people of Myanmar and Thailand affected by the earthquake.

AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives supported the statements of the AMM, calling for rapid, safe and unimpeded access to life-saving humanitarian assistance and relief efforts in Myanmar. They encouraged all stakeholders in Myanmar to focus on humanitarian assistance and facilitate relief efforts, and to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those in need, in a timely and effective manner without disruption and discrimination. AICHR underscored the importance of upholding human rights during emergency responses, and for a safe and enabling environment for humanitarian aid to be distributed equitably, with special attention to people in marginalised and vulnerable situations.

On 10 April 2025, AICHR met with and had a frank and interactive exchange of views with Pusat KOMAS (as the convening Secretariat of ASEANPeoples@ASEAN2025), a CSO with consultative status with AICHR.

### **2.1.5 41<sup>st</sup> Meeting**

AICHR convened its 41<sup>st</sup> Meeting on 12–16 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, Representative of Malaysia to AICHR, and attended by AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat. Timor-Leste attended the Meeting as Observer.

The Meeting deliberated on progress of the implementation of AICHR's priority programmes and activities, covering a range of thematic areas, such as mental health in the digital age, rights of children and persons with disabilities, business and human rights, human rights and the environment, human rights and policing, the intersection between conflict and human rights, human rights at sea, anti-

trafficking initiatives, and the ASEAN Youth Debate.

After considering input from ASBs, entities and centres, the Meeting agreed on the final text of the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment to be submitted to the AMM for adoption at the ASEAN Summit. The proposed ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development was also discussed, incorporating input following AICHR's consultation with the relevant ASBs, entities and centres.

The Meeting further deliberated on working drafts of the FYWP 2026–2030 and 2026 Priority Programmes / Activities of AICHR as preparations were made for the interface with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers at the 58<sup>th</sup> AMM.

AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand updated the meeting on recent human rights developments in their respective countries, including human rights challenges such as the transboundary impact of human rights, and on new and updated national laws, regulations and initiatives.

AICHR held its 16<sup>th</sup> annual Interface Meeting with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) and had an engaging and constructive discussion focusing, among others, on strengthening cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN and enhancing inter-sectoral collaboration.

In strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder engagement, AICHR had its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting with the ASEAN University Network–Human Rights Education (AUN-HRE) to discuss potential joint initiatives on human rights

education. The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of AICHR with the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism (WGAHRM), an Entity Associated with ASEAN under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter, focused on measures to strengthen the balanced discharge of AICHR's mandates and institutional capacity.

Notably, AICHR held its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting with the Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia), with the participation of representatives of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), and 24 children and youths. The meeting focused on issues related to children's rights and included the sharing of recommendations directly by children and youth to address climate change, migration, violence against children, and online harm.

AICHR held its 8<sup>th</sup> meetings with Australia and the European Union, its 4<sup>th</sup> meetings with Japan and Switzerland, and its 1<sup>st</sup> meetings with Norway and the Republic of Korea. The meetings discussed potential areas of collaboration, including knowledge sharing and capacity building, and recent human rights developments and emerging threats to human rights. Parties reaffirmed the shared commitment to deepening cooperation and

looked forward to a sustained and constructive dialogue on human rights.

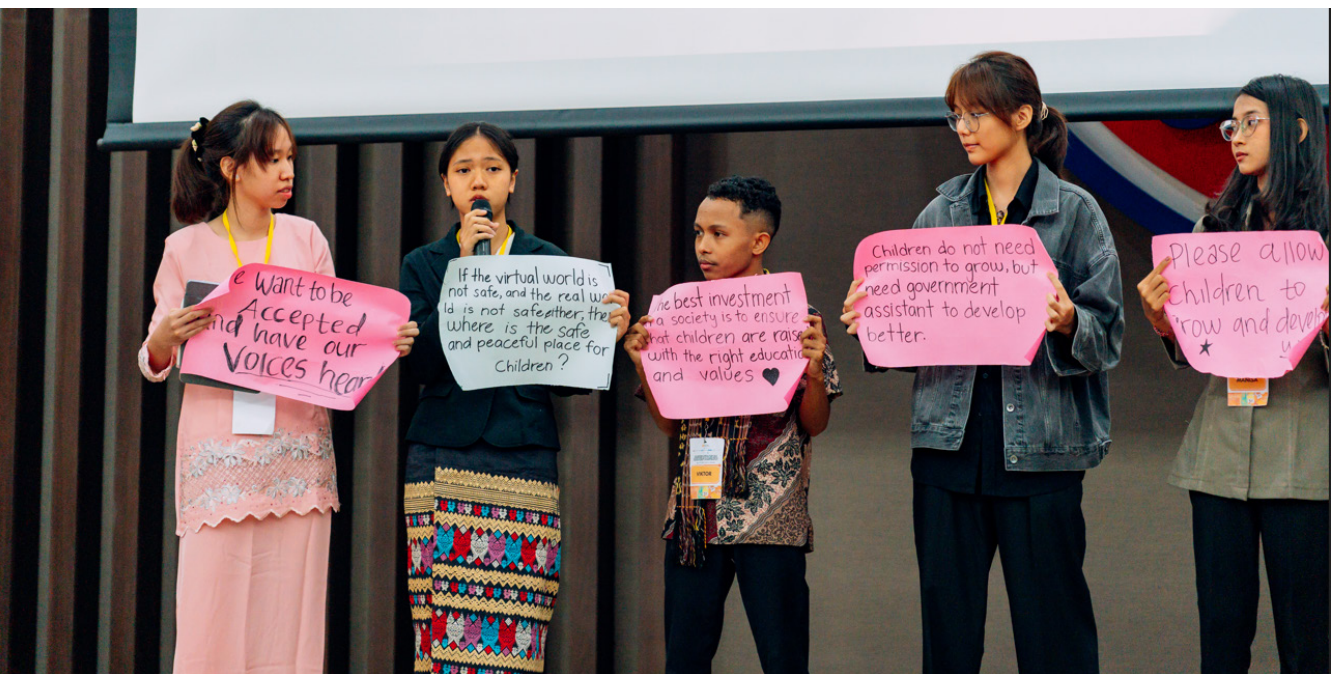
The 41<sup>st</sup> Meeting progressed and enhanced AICHR's work by, among others, refining thematic focus areas, strengthening partnership and cross-pillar coordination, and engaging in strategic planning towards advancing human rights cooperation in the region.

## 2.2 AICHR Priority Programmes and Activities

During the reporting period from 1 July 2024 to 15 June 2025, AICHR conducted 16 Priority Programmes and Activities.

### 2.2.1 ASEAN Forum on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly to Promote the Implementation of Article 24 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 15–16 July 2024 Banten, Indonesia

The Forum provided a platform for sharing measures and building the capacity of relevant



actors on the implementation of Article 24 of the AHRD on the right to peaceful assembly. Participants deliberated on the establishment of a platform to improve the skills and knowledge of practitioners in implementing Article 24 of the AHRD.

The Forum shared best practices and challenges in upholding the right to freedom of assembly in AMS and discussed challenges in exercising such rights in different contexts such as in the work to counter violent extremism, trafficking in persons, and promoting the rights of migrant workers, children, women, and persons with disabilities, and freedom of expression, religion and belief. Participants also discussed restrictions and procedural issues on the implementation of the right to freedom of assembly.

### **2.2.2**

#### **ASEAN Dialogue on Realising Southeast Asia as a Torture-Free Region**

**20–21 August 2024  
Banten, Indonesia**

The Dialogue provided a platform to share measures and enhance capacity building for police officers, security forces, and other law enforcement officers in Southeast Asia on the use of the Mendez Principles, Istanbul Protocol, Tokyo Rules, and Bangkok Rules. Additionally, it sought to develop comprehensive recommendations for the implementation of Article 14 of the AHRD, focusing on prevention, investigation, prosecution, and rehabilitation.

The Dialogue focused on progress by countries to comply with the UN Convention Against Torture. It also deliberated on the contributions of national human rights institutions (NHRIs), shared practices and lessons learnt on effective investigation interviews, including approaches in interviewing child victims, witnesses and children alleged to have or accused of having

committed crime-related offences while adopting a gender dimension, and the use of film to improve prison conditions in AMS.

This Dialogue was conducted as a joint activity between AICHR and SEANF.

### **2.2.3**

#### **Validation Workshop on the Development of Regional Guideline on the Non-Punishment Principle for Victims of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in ASEAN**

**2–3 September 2024  
Tangerang, Indonesia**

The Workshop was co-organised by AICHR and the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) to gather feedback from stakeholders, practitioners, and ASBs on the draft of a regional guideline for implementing the non-punishment principle for victims of trafficking in persons in AMS.

The Workshop was a follow-up from the Consultation to Share Best Practices and Challenges in Implementing Non-Punishment Principles in the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Laws, Policies and Practices of AMS, which took place in June 2024 in Bali. It contributed to the implementation of the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Work Plan Against Trafficking in Persons 2023–2028 and the AICHR FYWP 2021–2025, and the realisation of the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP).

Input from AICHR, SOMTC, and Task Forces to counter trafficking in persons in the respective AMS, CSOs, and international organisations on the draft of the regional guideline on the non-punishment principle for victims of human trafficking was gathered. The discussion focused on applying the non-punishment principle in victim screening and identification, when victims are on trial,

and when victims have been convicted; and monitoring the implementation of the non-punishment principle in work relating to trafficking in persons.

#### 2.2.4

### **AICHR-SEANF Regional Workshop: Sharing Good Practices and Effective Remedy for Migrant Workers in Business and Human Rights in ASEAN 24 September 2024 Bangkok, Thailand**

The Workshop was conducted as part of the 2024 UN Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum, conducted by UN agencies from 23–27 September 2024. It focused on good practices and effective remedies for migrant workers in business contexts, the efforts by NHRIs to promote remedies, and corporate performance in the context of transnational human rights impacts. It also deliberated on the progress of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) implementation in Japan, the role of the private sector in promoting non-state, non-judicial remedies, and challenges faced by migrant workers in accessing justice.

Experts and participants exchanged views on good practices to move forward, including to develop and integrate the UNGPs and international standards into national policies and regulations, enhance stakeholder engagement and public participation in business and human rights initiatives, and strengthen support and safeguards for vulnerable groups, including migrant workers, among others.

The Workshop addressed challenges of the current and future remedy programmes, for instance, to streamline access to justice mechanisms for migrant workers, strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks to protect environmental rights, enhance capacities of the justice sector institutions to address business-related human rights violations, and improve legal empowerment and aid for communities affected by business operations.

Aiming to promote effective remedies in the region, participants exchanged views on the development of a regional framework to address transboundary human rights impacts by businesses and strengthen regional cooperation on migrant worker protection and rights.



## 2.2.5

### **5<sup>th</sup> Dialogue on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC)**

2–3 October 2024

Makati, the Philippines

AICHR Philippines, in partnership with CRC Asia, conducted the 5<sup>th</sup> Dialogue to discuss the latest General Comment No. 26 on children’s rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change.

The Dialogue explored the ethical obligations of the private sector in upholding human and children’s rights, urging an immediate shift from “business as usual” to achieve a healthy and sustainable environment for generations to come. The sessions concluded with the suggestion of establishing a working group willing to stand with children and civil society and integrating it as part of a regional plan of action to advance environmental human rights.

This series of UN CRC dialogues began in 2018, affirming AICHR’s ongoing efforts to promote children’s rights in ASEAN by working together with child rights organisations to advocate for children’s participation in policy-making processes. It focuses on sharing best practices and addressing emerging challenges faced by the region in implementing the UN CRC, which has been ratified by all AMS.

## 2.2.6

### **ASEAN Regional Dialogue: Sharing Good Practices on Enhancing Human Rights during the COVID-19 Pandemic in ASEAN**

28–29 October 2024

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The Dialogue aimed to provide an ASEAN platform for discussions among relevant stakeholders in sharing experiences and crisis responses related to the COVID-19 pandemic

and identifying areas of future cooperation, while documenting best practices in addressing human rights within identified cross-cutting areas.

The Dialogue noted best practices and challenges in relation to the right to health, quality and accessible education, labour rights, the right to information and privacy, and social protection responses during and post pandemic.

Experts and participants explored potential avenues for AICHR, ASBs, and stakeholders to help mainstream the right to health and quality education within the ASEAN Community, as well as address challenges to protect labour rights and the right to information and privacy.

## 2.2.7

### **6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue**

5 November 2024

ASEAN Headquarters /

ASEAN Secretariat

Jakarta, Indonesia

The ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue is AICHR’s institutional innovation that provides ASEAN governments a forum to discuss difficult human rights issues, cases and emerging challenges in an open, transparent, frank and constructive manner.

Different forms of the Dialogue had taken place in previous years, and it then culminated in the ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on the ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue, adopted at the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit on 5 September 2023. The declaration calls for “constructive discussion, deliberation and exercise of mutual respect and understanding with a view to improving cooperation among AMS in enhancing capacity to address current and emerging human rights challenges”.

Through the regularity of the Dialogue, AICHR provides AMS a constructive

framework for engagement, gathering input, data and recommendations from stakeholders towards improving cooperation and enhancing capacity to better promote and protect human rights.

Co-hosted by Indonesia and Lao PDR, AICHR convened the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue on 5 November 2024 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The participants, who included representatives from AMS, CPR, and CSOs, exchanged information, reported on recent normative frameworks, policy developments, best practices, and ways to overcome challenges to implement the AHRD. They also shared experiences on the accession and implementation of international human rights treaties, including reporting requirements, following up on recommendations, and their participation in the UPR process.

Thematic discussions during the Dialogue covered the rights of migrant workers, women, children and persons with disabilities, gender equality, business and human rights, freedom of religion and belief, protection of journalists, human rights past abuses, the death penalty, environmental human rights and climate change, online sexual violence against children, digital rights, disinformation and misinformation, treatment of accused persons and prisoners, access to justice, prevention of torture, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others.

The Dialogue stimulated constructive discussions, deliberations and the exercise of mutual respect and understanding. Stakeholders such as NHRIs and CSOs were engaged and shared their views and recommendations towards improving cooperation and enhancing capacity to better promote and protect human rights.

Commemorating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AICHR's establishment on 23 October 2024 and the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AHRD on 18 November 2024, participants reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation to promote and protect human rights in the region in line with the AHRD and the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the AHRD.

The ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue is evidence of the incremental and evolutionary approach adopted by AICHR in promoting discussion on human rights issues that affect the region.

**2.2.8**  
**AICHR Regional Dialogue and**  
**Consultation on Advancing**  
**Development of Environmental**  
**Rights in ASEAN**  
7–8 November 2024  
ASEAN Headquarters /  
ASEAN Secretariat  
Jakarta, Indonesia

The Dialogue provided a platform for AICHR and ASBs, as well as national and relevant stakeholders, for consultation and exchanges on environmental issues facing ASEAN. It also took stock of ASEAN's environment cooperation and progress in promoting and protecting environmental rights.

Participants shared experiences on their national implementation of ASEAN and global instruments and agreements related to the environment, challenges and successes in achieving SDGs on environmental issues, and related cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration in ASEAN. They reaffirmed the important link between human rights and the environment, and highlighted national and regional standard-setting, addressing transboundary impacts, State and corporate accountability, public participation, access to

justice, business sector responsibility, and the importance of multi-stakeholder platforms in mainstreaming a rights-based approach to environmental protection in the region.

The proposed ASEAN environmental framework for a declaration on the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment was also discussed in a consultation at the Dialogue.

### **2.2.9 ASEAN Dialogue on Human Rights and Policing 2–3 December 2024 Bali, Indonesia**

The Dialogue marked a significant milestone in advancing human rights-based policing across ASEAN. Representatives from AMS' national police forces, ministries of justice, ministries of foreign affairs, NHRIs, CSOs, Association of Southeast Asian Nations Chiefs of Police (ASEANAPOL) and Australian Federal Police attended the programme aimed at promoting police integrity, professionalism, and adherence to international human rights standards.

Key themes explored included addressing gender-based violence and ensuring ethical treatment of detainees, promoting community policing strategies to uphold freedoms and protect human rights defenders, and enhancing transparency and accountability in law enforcement practices.

The Dialogue also shared the best practices, exchanged perspectives, and developed innovative solutions to common challenges to contribute to ASEAN's efforts towards a more humane, professional, and accountable policing system while reaffirming commitment to aligning policing practices with the AHRD and international standards such as the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.

### **2.2.10 AICHR Workshop on Best Practices in Promoting Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge in Responding and Adapting to the Impact of Climate Change 9–10 December 2024 Manila, the Philippines**

This inaugural Workshop addressed the effects of the global climate emergency on indigenous groups and local and traditional communities, emphasising how their unique perspectives can contribute to facing this challenge head-on. The roles of AICHR and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in addressing climate change through ongoing initiatives were discussed by representatives from government agencies and CSOs. Additionally, experiences and best practices from ASEAN and beyond, such as the Pacific Island states, were shared.

The Workshop deliberated on ongoing regional initiatives on climate change mitigation and adaptation to enhance and support the adaptive capacity of indigenous groups and local and traditional communities, including the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment.

### **2.2.11 AICHR Workshop on Best Practice Approaches for Implementing Accepted UPR Recommendations 11–12 December 2024 Luang Prabang, Lao PDR**

The Workshop aimed to strengthen the implementation of international human rights treaty obligations by AMS. It provided a platform for government officials, CSOs, and external partners to exchange experiences, lessons learnt,

and best practices on implementing accepted UPR recommendations.

The discussions facilitated an exchange of views and deliberations to enhance understanding of the UPR process and its value in promoting and protecting human rights. Best practices and experiences on implementing UPR recommendations and strengthening collaboration among AMS and with external partners were also shared.

## 2.2.12 AICHR Transition Workshop 10 February 2025 Langkawi, Malaysia

As the Chair, AICHR Malaysia hosted a Transition Workshop themed “Building Better and Stronger, and Staying Relevant, Inclusive, Innovative and People-Centred” to facilitate a smooth transition between outgoing AICHR Representatives (2022–2024) and incoming AICHR Representatives (2025–2027). This was the fourth workshop of its kind since AICHR was established.

The Workshop deliberated on AICHR’s progress and challenges, as well as measures

to ensure continuity in AICHR’s operations between the two terms. It facilitated the sharing of knowledge and alignment of work, particularly on the new FYWP to be developed in 2025, AICHR’s Terms of Reference, and the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment.

Former Representatives spoke about their experience with AICHR in the past, and incoming Representatives provided valuable insights into key human rights trends and emerging issues, and challenges for AICHR. The Workshop also discussed the evolving regional human rights landscape and its implications for AICHR, as well as opportunities to advance human rights diplomacy in the region.

There was an active and constructive dialogue session between AICHR with discussants from WGAHRM, an Entity Associated with ASEAN under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter, and two CSOs with consultative relationships with AICHR, the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP). This interactive dialogue session provided an opportunity for civil society to share their views and expectations on AICHR’s future direction.



Key points that emerged from the Workshop included the need to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration on human rights, and for AICHR's work to be impactful through its adaptability, flexibility, and being balanced on the promotion and protection aspects of human rights.

### **2.2.13**

#### **AICHR Workshop on Implementation of Human Rights Treaties to Which All ASEAN Member States are Parties 6–7 March 2025 Vientiane, Lao PDR**

The Workshop aimed at strengthening the implementation of international human rights treaty obligations by AMS. It provided a platform for government officials, NHRIs, CSOs, and external partners to exchange experiences, lessons learnt, and best practices on implementing human rights treaties to which all AMS are parties.

Discussions focused on efforts to identify practical, internal legal procedures among AMS on how the legal drafting process may be undertaken to ensure the implementation of human rights treaty obligations nationally; share best practices on drafting and presenting the national reports before treaty bodies; exchange lessons learnt in considering the concluding observations of treaty bodies; share best practices among AMS regarding their localisation of human rights treaty obligations to domestic legislation; and encourage ASBs such as the ASEAN Law Ministers' Meeting (ALAWMM) / ASEAN Senior Law Officials Meeting (ASLOM) to undertake cross-sectoral cooperation that contributes to the implementation and realisation of human rights for the peoples of ASEAN.

Experiences and best practices related to the implementation of treaties on treaty ratification, localising treaties into domestic legislation, translating concluding observations into

action plans, engaging with stakeholders such as NHRIs and CSOs, and national tracking, monitoring and reporting were also shared.

### **2.2.14**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> AICHR Consultation on the Human Right to Development to Enhance the ASEAN Community: Realising Article 35 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 28 April 2025 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

This 2<sup>nd</sup> Consultation followed the first consultation held from 11 to 12 November 2019 in Jakarta, Indonesia. As the ASEAN Chair in 2025, Malaysia hosted the consultation as part of its inclusivity and sustainability initiatives.

The Kuala Lumpur consultation deepened ASEAN deliberations towards adopting a common approach and position to protect the right to development and linking it with the right to peace. AMS recognise both rights to development and peace under Articles 35, 36, 37 and 38 of the AHRD. In particular, the consultation focused on ways for ASEAN to provide a regional platform to operationalise the implementation of the right to development as a priority.

Led by H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, AICHR Chair and Representative of Malaysia, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Consultation highlighted the importance of the right to development in all its dimensions and how the right relates to inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and ASEAN peace. These matters were emphasised as core matters in AICHR's human rights agenda.

Participants also provided their aspirations, feedback and input to the proposed ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development and its



AICHR Malaysia team

implementation, to enhance the value of the document.

Additionally, participants presented views on addressing inequalities and responsible business conduct while treating the right to development as a cross-cutting right with important thematic areas such as migration, trade and investment, climate change, environmental pollution, business and human rights, new technologies, and SDGs.

## 2.2.15

### **AICHR Regional Consultation to Support the Development of the AICHR Five-Year Work Plan (2026–2030) in Line with the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and Strategic Plans of Action**

29 April 2025

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

AICHR convened this Regional Consultation to develop its next FYWP (2026–2030). It marked the first time that AICHR has held an open, regional consultation on its work plan, to discuss and receive feedback and input from stakeholders, including ASBs, entities and centres, NHRIs, CSOs and experts from AMS.

Participants, resource persons and speakers at the consultation discussed numerous important issues including broadening AICHR’s thematic areas to include both emerging traditional and non-traditional security challenges such as the use of artificial intelligence; governance and accountability matters; transnational organised crimes; online scamming; forced labour; impact on human rights as a result of trade wars and the imposition of governmental tariffs; the rights of older persons and the care sector; human rights in post-conflict and reconciliation settings; and advanced protection for persons with disabilities.

The Regional Consultation also heard presentations of findings from three reviews and evaluations of the current FYWP — one by the ASEAN Secretariat and two by independent experts from Malaysia and Thailand. Key follow-up actions and recommendations included maintaining critical focus areas for long-term impact, improving tracking, categorising thematic monitoring and evaluation areas, updating outdated human rights work areas, institutionalising outcome-oriented frameworks, and establishing regular consultation and structured feedback mechanisms with stakeholders.



AICHR was also encouraged to cooperate with Parliamentarians, national and local authorities, NHRIs and the private sector on relevant human rights matters.

More than 60 delegates participated in the consultation. They included AICHR Representatives, Alternate Representatives and Assistants, and representatives from ASBs, NHRIs, and CSOs.

**2.2.16**  
**Launch of the ASEAN Guideline on the Implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle for Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Persons, and SOMTC and AICHR Consultation Meeting on the Implementation of the ASEAN Guideline on the Implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle for Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Persons**

2–3 June 2025  
 ASEAN Headquarters /  
 ASEAN Secretariat  
 Jakarta, Indonesia

On 2 June 2025, AICHR and SOMTC jointly launched the ASEAN Guideline on

the Implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Persons. The launch of the Guideline marks a significant milestone in ASEAN’s regional efforts to strengthen victim protection in addressing trafficking in persons, in line with Article 14(7) of ACTIP. The Guideline aims to provide practical direction to AMS when implementing the non-punishment principle, ensuring that victims of trafficking are not penalised for unlawful acts they were compelled to commit as a direct consequence of their trafficking experience.

The launch event was opened by the Vice Minister for Human Rights Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and attended by 130 participants comprising representatives from ASBs, Dialogue Partners, justice agencies, NHRIs, CSOs, and academia. A panel discussion followed, featuring sharing on the importance of integrating the non-punishment principle into national legal and policy frameworks and enhancing cooperation to support its implementation across the region. Participants welcomed the Guideline as a progressive step and looked forward to its implementation by AMS.

On 3 June 2025, a closed-door interface consultation meeting was convened, attended

by representatives from SOMTC and AICHR, including Timor-Leste as Observer, to deliberate on practical steps to promote and implement the Guideline at the regional and national levels. This initiative reflects ASEAN's strong cross-sectoral commitment to advancing a comprehensive, human rights-based, and

victim-centred approach in the fight against trafficking in persons.

The Guideline is now available in English and will be translated into the national languages of AMS.





### 3

## Mainstreaming Human Rights Across Pillars of the ASEAN Community

AICHR is the ASEAN human rights body that was established under Article 14 of the ASEAN Charter. As the overarching human rights institution in ASEAN tasked with the overall responsibility to promote and protect human rights, AICHR continues to mainstream human rights across the three ASEAN Community pillars and strengthen cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration.

During the reporting period, AICHR participated in the development of the ASEAN Guideline on the Implementation of Alternatives to Detention for Children in the Context of Migration, the Post-2025 ASEAN Roadmap on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and the ASEAN Guidelines on the Prevention of and Response to Transnational Child and Forced Marriage, among others.

Importantly, by developing a consensus on human rights listed in the AHRD, AICHR has been integrating human rights principles into regional policy frameworks and initiatives. As an example, AICHR has been leading the drafting and negotiation of two key regional human rights declarations: the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment, and the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development. At the time of writing, the former had been submitted to the AMM for adoption at the 47<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in October 2025, while the latter is being finalised following consultations with ASBs. Both proposed declarations embed human rights considerations into ASEAN's broader development and environmental agendas.





A further example is evidenced by the 2 April 2025 AICHR Press Release on the Deadly Earthquakes in Myanmar and Thailand on 28 March 2025 that acknowledged the swift response of the relevant parties and global community in mobilising rescue and relief efforts, emphasised the importance of upholding human rights during emergency responses, and called for aid to be distributed equally. Measures taken to provide essential medical care and healthcare services, and access to medical facilities should prioritise those who are in vulnerable and marginalised situations, including women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. AICHR also urges the immediate facilitation of humanitarian access to all affected communities and areas without disruption and discrimination, in line with international humanitarian response principles.

Initiated by the AICHR Chair, AICHR has shown its capacity and effectiveness in arriving at decisions on urgent and specific situations in a timely manner, consistent with ASEAN's

priorities as envisaged by the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045*. AICHR's position also underscored the interconnection between human rights and humanitarian assistance, highlighting the importance of cross-pillar and cross-sectoral collaboration.

In addition, AICHR promotes human rights mainstreaming by participating in the implementation of cross-sectoral ASEAN instruments with ASBs. Through engagements deliberating on regional initiatives and plans of action, AICHR ensures that human rights are integrated into ASEAN's responses regarding complex regional challenges such as human trafficking, violence against women and children, radicalisation and violent extremism, immigration detention, and child labour. These efforts to mainstream human rights across the three pillars of the ASEAN Community have effectively contributed to the development of strategies, common approaches, and positions on human rights matters of interest to ASEAN.

## 4

# Thematic Leads and Journey of Human Rights

A review of all AICHR activities from January 2010 to December 2024 reveals that over the past fifteen years, AICHR conducted 155 activities, covering a range of 40 thematic issues. To enhance in-depth approaches to the thematic areas, in 2025 AICHR introduced a “Thematic Leads” modality for AICHR Representatives to voluntarily lead on key thematic issues of interest and expertise.

This approach will strengthen and enhance AICHR’s programming as it encourages a more focused effort on the said thematic area while avoiding duplication and multiplication. It will

also provide AICHR with a focal point person on the matter as the “go-to” Representative in the Commission.

From the range of 40 thematic issues identified since AICHR’s inception, the Thematic Leads modality has condensed them into 32 thematic areas to be implemented for the 2026–2028 period, as shown below. Suggested follow-up action and recommended outcome documents, particularly for “matured” human rights themes, will be conceptualised among the Representatives for further action in the coming period.

No	Thematic Area
1	Business and Human Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Gender Mainstreaming</li> <li>1.2 Prevention of Forced Labour and Human Rights at Sea</li> <li>1.3 Forced Labour and Due Diligence</li> </ul>
2	Child Rights and UN CRC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 UN CRC</li> <li>2.2 Juvenile Justice</li> </ul>
3	Digital Rights and Human Rights in the Context of Cyber and Digital Space
4	Drug Policy and Human Rights
5	Environment, Human Rights and Climate Change
6	Freedom of Expression and Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6.1 Media</li> <li>6.2 Disinformation and Misinformation</li> </ul>
7	Freedom of Peaceful Assembly
8	Freedom of Religion or Belief
9	Gender Equality
10	Human Rights at Sea
11	Human Rights, Peace and Conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11.1 Human Rights in Humanitarian Action</li> <li>11.2 Conflict and Human Rights</li> <li>11.3 Peace and Peacebuilding</li> <li>11.4 Right to Peace and to Enjoy Peace</li> </ul>

No	Thematic Area
12	Human Rights Treaties and UPR, and their Implementation
13	Judiciary 13.1 Access to Justice 13.2 Rights of Accused Persons
14	Migration 14.1 Migrant Workers 14.2 Migration Management
15	Human Rights Mechanisms 15.1 Regional Mechanisms 15.2 ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue 15.3 ASEAN Inter-Sectoral Cooperation on the ASEAN Commitments on Rights of Women and Children 15.4 Development of ASEAN Legal Human Rights Instruments
16	Nationality and Statelessness
17	Persons with Disabilities
18	Prevention and Countering of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism
19	Prevention of Torture and Cruel Treatment
20	Right to Education
21	Right to Development 21.1 Sustainable Development (SDGs / Millennium Development Goals (MDGs))
22	Right to Health
23	Rights of Indigenous Peoples
24	Right to Life
25	Right to Maritime Science
26	Rights of Older Persons
27	Right to Remedy 27.1 Referral Systems and Grievance Mechanisms
28	Transnational Crime and Human Rights 28.1 Anti-Trafficking in Persons 28.2 Online Scamming
29	Urban Pollution
30	Water and Sanitation
31	Women and CEDAW 31.1 Rights of Migrant Women Workers
32	Youth Engagement



Aligned with ASEAN's priorities, AICHR's work in this current reporting period has focused on the following 17 thematic areas:

- Business and human rights
- Children
- Climate change
- Disinformation and misinformation
- Environment
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of peaceful assembly
- Human trafficking
- Indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge
- International human rights treaty reporting
- Migrant workers
- Preventing and countering the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism
- Recovery measures and protection of related rights affected by COVID-19
- Rights of accused persons
- Right to development
- Right to peace and to enjoy peace
- Women

This includes building on previously addressed themes and exploring new priority areas

and cross-cutting issues where an integrated, multi-sectoral approach is essential for the continued mainstreaming of human rights, and responding to ASEAN's priorities both to promote and protect human rights, fundamental freedoms and social justice, and to ensure our peoples live with dignity, in peace, harmony and prosperity.

As evident from the above, the thematic areas of AICHR's work show a strong alignment with the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the AHRD, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, including children, women, persons with disabilities, and migrant workers.

The AICHR FYWP will ensure a steady focus on the framework outlined in the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045* and its Strategic Plans, and improve on the current FYWP by adopting an innovative, responsive, inclusive, forward-looking, and people-centred approach. This would be pursued holistically, fostering greater synergy and coordination across sectors under the three ASEAN Community pillars.

## 5

# Institutional-Strengthening Initiatives

Over the course of the reporting period, AICHR introduced new initiatives to strengthen its institutional capacity, increase its visibility, and enhance its effectiveness. Of note is the convening of an AICHR Retreat in February 2025 on the sidelines of the 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting in Langkawi, Malaysia. It provided a safe space for Representatives and Alternate Representatives to reflect on AICHR’s work and direction, and discuss these in an open, frank and constructive manner. Numerous strategic directions and ways to improve AICHR’s work were also shared, along with agreement on the text of the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment.

AICHR’s agenda item on recent developments in ASEAN has become an important platform for open discussion on issues faced in the region, including emerging trends and challenges, which enhances responsiveness and relevance in AICHR’s work. This agenda item not only generates useful insights and

information and strengthens our engagement with current human rights issues but also provides a constructive platform that AICHR Representatives can continue to build upon as they navigate evolving regional contexts. The breadth and nature of the reporting show the concomitant confidence and comfort level in deliberating on often difficult human rights issues.

Additionally, AICHR has increased public dissemination of its information, improved transparency and strengthened engagement by regularly uploading reports on its activities onto the AICHR website. This sharing of key information and effective reporting shows the breadth of AICHR’s work across multiple thematic areas. It has also allowed stakeholders to follow ASEAN developments on human rights while appreciating progress and challenges.

To demonstrate continued relevance and alignment with regional and cross-sectoral and cross-pillar priorities, AICHR’s Thematic Leads



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modality, described earlier, which practises the assigning of thematic leads, will improve coordination and collaboration within AICHR and across ASEAN Community pillars on human rights-related topics.

AICHR continues to receive letters and communications on regional human rights issues and concerns, seeking the assistance of the Commission. Since 2010, AICHR has received 131 communications, out of which 53 were received from 2022 to date. Eighteen communications were received during this reporting period. The themes raised include the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, persons seeking asylum, migrant workers, and victims of trafficking and conflict.

Where the correspondence pertains to one ASEAN Member State, it is referred to

the respective Representative, but where it relates to the region, it is shared with AICHR Representatives for consideration. AICHR Representatives, on a voluntary basis, will report to AICHR and parties involved on any action taken. AICHR had responded, on 11 June 2025, to two letters from five UN Special Procedures mandate holders regarding the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment.

These mentioned efforts reflect AICHR's self-awareness to evolve and respond rapidly and effectively to the changing human rights landscape in ASEAN. Together, they contribute to the strengthening of AICHR's institutional foundations, enabling it to operate with greater coherence, readiness, and responsiveness within ASEAN's architecture.

## 6

# AICHR Key Engagements

The following provides a brief overview of AICHR's engagements. Further information may be found in the respective press releases, where available.

Community pillars, and contributing to the implementation of regional frameworks on cross-pillar and cross-sectoral areas.

### 6.1

#### **Engagement with ASEAN Organs, Bodies and Entities**

During the period of reporting, AICHR had constructive engagements and dialogues with the following ASEAN organs, bodies, and entities under the three Community pillars.

#### 6.1.1

##### **ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting**

On 24 July 2024, AICHR held its annual Interface with the AMM during the 57<sup>th</sup> AMM and Related Meetings, with the participation of Timor-Leste as Observer. AICHR submitted its 2024 Annual Report to the AMM, outlining key accomplishments and developments of AICHR in the reporting period from July 2023 to June 2024.

The AMM commended AICHR's work and accomplishments over the past years in the promotion and protection of human rights in the region, its collaboration with ASBs and its engagement with Dialogue Partners and relevant stakeholders, including NHRIs and CSOs. AICHR was encouraged to continue discharging its mandate and functions as the overarching human rights body of ASEAN, mainstreaming human rights across all the

#### 6.1.2

##### **Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN**

The 16<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between AICHR and CPR was held on 16 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat.

Co-chaired by the AICHR and CPR Chairs, the Meeting highlighted the importance of continued collaboration between AICHR and CPR for the promotion and protection of human rights and through dialogue in the region. AICHR updated CPR on its work, including the publication of the AICHR Annual Report 2024, thematic areas of focus following the final review of the AICHR FYWP, and progress in developing the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, and the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development. AICHR reaffirmed its commitment to cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration.

Discussions included the need to ensure consideration of civil and political rights alongside economic rights and the right to development, while maintaining a balanced approach in the discharge of AICHR's mandates. The Meeting commended AICHR on its work in line with the ASEAN principles of



consensus, unity, and Centrality, and encouraged AICHR to deepen its engagement with relevant ASBs to ensure complementarities across the ASEAN Community pillars with human rights considerations.

### **6.1.3 Secretary-General of ASEAN**

AICHR held its annual Interface with the Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, on 24 July 2024. Parties shared views on AICHR’s ongoing work to advance human rights cooperation and dialogue in ASEAN.

The Secretary-General reiterated the ASEAN Secretariat’s support for AICHR’s mandate and activities, commending its contributions to ASEAN’s priorities in fostering cross-sectoral

and cross-pillar collaboration. AICHR was encouraged to consider translating vision into action and tangible results by aligning its new FYWP with the *ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future*, increasing impact through vigorous efforts and initiatives that respond to current challenges such as climate change and digitalisation, and enhancing resilience and connectivity to keep AICHR agile and fit for purpose.

### **6.1.4 ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment**

On 8 April 2025, AICHR and ASOEN held an inaugural Interface Consultation in Penang, Malaysia. The consultation was a significant milestone in the development of the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment.

## 6.1.6

### **Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism**

Discussions centred on the content, text and strategic direction of the proposed declaration aimed at strengthening inter-sectoral and inter-pillar coordination and enhancing policy coherence to ensure alignment with ASEAN's existing frameworks and commitments.

The Interface Consultation reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to enhancing and advancing policies that will promote environment and climate resilience and awareness, inclusivity and sustainability, and the protection of human rights for present and future generations.

## 6.1.5

### **ASEAN University Network–Human Rights Education**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Interface Meeting between AICHR and AUN-HRE was held on 14 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat.

The Meeting featured an interactive and engaging exchange of views and reflections on AICHR's thematic priorities over the past few years, as well as highlights of AUN-HRE's activities in promoting human rights education and research while maintaining a platform for collaboration and capacity building among member institutions to strengthen regional cooperation on human rights education. Discussions focused on academic collaboration, curriculum development, and efforts to integrate human rights and peace in higher-level education.

A proposal to promote a framework for human rights-based universities in ASEAN was shared for collaboration with AICHR.

AICHR held its 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting with WGAHRM on 14 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat. WGAHRM is an Entity Associated with ASEAN under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter.

At the Meeting, AICHR and WGAHRM shared information on their respective human rights work and priorities and discussed developments on human rights in the region, including the rights of migrant workers, women and children, and persons with disabilities, the right to development, business and human rights, transnational organised and financial crimes, digital rights, data privacy, human rights and the environment, right and access to information, climate-related human rights matters, human rights cities, online harm, artificial intelligence, freedom of expression, emerging geopolitical issues impacting human rights, economic inequalities, measures to strengthen the balanced discharge of AICHR's mandates, and the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Deliberations on a people-centred assessment approach, human rights impact reporting, strengthening capacity for inclusive civil society engagement, and equipping the ASEAN Secretariat with technical and research capacities to implement AICHR's human rights initiatives were also held.

## **6.2 CSOs with Consultative Relationship with AICHR**

At present, there are 30 CSOs with consultative relationship with AICHR. During the reporting period, there were six applications by CSOs, showing increasing interest in AICHR's work. The applications are still pending final deliberations by AICHR. The 6<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between AICHR and CSOs is due to be held in July 2025.

### **6.2.1 Pusat KOMAS**

AICHR hosted a lunch meeting with Pusat KOMAS, a CSO with consultative relationship with AICHR, on 10 April 2025 in Penang, Malaysia. Pusat KOMAS is currently serving as the convening Secretariat for the ASEANPeoples@ASEAN2025.

The Meeting had a frank and interactive exchange of information on AICHR's programmes and thematic areas, and activities of the ASEANPeoples@ASEAN2025. It also discussed recent developments on human rights in ASEAN. Participants extended their condolences to the affected survivors and victims of the devastating earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand and further appreciated the work of ASEAN and its relevant sectoral bodies in recovery and relief efforts.

The Meeting noted the information shared on events to be hosted by the ASEANPeoples@ASEAN2025 in May 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and welcomed the continued engagement.

## **6.2.2 Child Rights Coalition Asia**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Interface Meeting between AICHR and CRC Asia with a delegation comprising child and youth delegates and former, current and alternate children's rights representatives of ACWC from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, was held on 15 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat.

The Meeting featured an open dialogue and interactive engagement on children's rights, focusing on issues relating to the development of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children. Children and youths shared their statements, concerns and messages on climate change, migration, poverty, discrimination, and violence against children. The issues raised were from country-level consultations held by CRC Asia that identified key and urgent issues of violence affecting children and youth in their communities. These included physical, sexual, and psychological violence, bullying and discrimination against marginalised children, online safety, the interconnectedness of violence against women and children, climate change, and the heightened vulnerability of children in situations of migration.

The Meeting also discussed potential collaborations and welcomed continued engagement. AICHR expressed its appreciation to CRC Asia, the children and youths, and ACWC for sharing their views and aspirations, and further acknowledged the importance of child and youth participation in AICHR's work. Participants highlighted the need to have an open dialogue and sustained collaboration between AICHR, governments, children and youth, and civil society to effectively combat violence against children.

## **6.3**

### **Engagement with External Partners**

#### **6.3.1**

#### **The Regional Support Office of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and Related Transnational Crime**

On 14 November 2024, AICHR held its first meeting with the RSO of the Bali Process in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR.

The meeting aimed to explore opportunities for collaboration in addressing trafficking in persons, people smuggling, and related transnational crimes. Both sides expressed interest in pursuing future cooperation and shared the commitment to strengthening regional responses to trafficking and related human rights challenges.

#### **6.3.2**

#### **Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum**

On 25 July 2024, AICHR met with SEANF as part of its regular engagements held since 2021.

At the meeting, AICHR and SEANF exchanged updates regarding activities undertaken by the Commission and SEANF's member institutions. The joint activity between AICHR and SEANF, "ASEAN Dialogue on Realising Southeast Asia as a Torture-Free Region," conducted in August 2024, was highlighted. Discussions also focused on possible regional referral modalities for human rights cases. SEANF shared about the development of the Inter-NHRI Inquiry Mechanism (INIM) of Timor-Leste.

Parties reaffirmed their readiness to collaborate on common issues such as the prevention of torture, environmental rights, and business and human rights.

#### **6.3.3**

#### **Dialogue Partners**

AICHR met with the following Dialogue Partners on the stated dates:

- 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting with Australia: 12 May 2025
- 1<sup>st</sup> Interface Meeting with Norway: 13 May 2025
- 4<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting with Japan: 13 May 2025
- 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting with the European Union: 14 May 2025
- 4<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting with Switzerland: 15 May 2025
- 1<sup>st</sup> Interface Meeting with the Republic of Korea: 16 May 2025

## **6.4**

### **Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement**

AICHR notes that greater engagement with relevant stakeholders, such as CSOs, NHRIs, regional human rights bodies, youth, and the private sector, among others, could enhance knowledge sharing and contribute to capacity building in tackling human rights-related topics of interest in the region. For example, structured engagement with NHRIs would encourage more opportunities for open dialogue, cooperation and mutual learning.

## 7

# Participation of Timor-Leste in AICHR's Meetings and Activities

Following the adoption of the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste at the 32<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting on 3 February 2023 and the Revised Guidelines for the Implementation of the Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste in ASEAN adopted at the 35<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting on 8 October 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR, AICHR has been inviting Timor-Leste as Observer to all its meetings held from March 2023 to date, including AICHR dialogues on human

rights among AMS and between AICHR and Dialogue Partners.

Continuing the practice, in 2025, representatives of Timor-Leste have been attending AICHR meetings (including the February 2025 Retreat in Langkawi, Malaysia), taking part in discussions, and delivering closing interventions. They have also participated in all of AICHR's programmes and activities, including the Transition Workshop in February 2025.



# 8

## AICHR's 2025 in Review

### 8.1

#### Two Proposed ASEAN

#### **Declarations: Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment; and on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development**

In 2025, AICHR has progressed key thematic areas such as the right to peace, the right to development, business and human rights, and environmental rights protection to address climate change.

AICHR continues to shape ASEAN's position on human rights by advancing two declarations adopting an ASEAN-led, ASEAN-owned, and whole-of-ASEAN approach. The proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment will elaborate on Article 28f of the AHRD, and represents a culmination of a two-year project to develop an ASEAN environmental rights framework. Since 2014, AICHR has organised no less than 11 programmes to promote and mainstream human rights in relation to the environment.

One key recommendation that emerged from the AICHR workshop in June 2021 was to develop a regional framework on environmental rights. The following year, AICHR established the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group to commence the drafting process for this framework. The initiative was spearheaded by the then-AICHR Thailand Representative, H.E. Amara Pongsapich, with the support of Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia. The instrument was envisioned to serve not only as a statement of principles, but also as a foundation for concrete action to give substantive effect to Article 28f.

The proposed declaration seeks to explicitly affirm the vital and intrinsic link between environmental protection and the full realisation of human rights, and chart a sustainable path to safeguarding the environment as an imperative for future generations, while augmenting ASEAN's resilience to climate-related challenges. It further aspires to be inclusive on key issues, including protecting the rights of groups in vulnerable and marginalised situations, freedom of information, public participation and effective access to justice and remedies.

At the time of writing, the proposed declaration had been agreed by AICHR and has been submitted to the AMM.

The second proposed declaration is related to the right to development and the right to peace. ASEAN's economic, social, cultural and political progress over the past decades reflects the region's evolving commitment to inclusive growth and sustainable development. Aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs, ASEAN's vision of development extends beyond economic growth. It encompasses peace, strong institutions, equitable opportunities, access to clean water and sanitation, decent work, and reduced inequalities, among others. At its core, development must improve people's lives, ensure their well-being, and empower them to thrive in society.

Recognising this multidimensional understanding of human development, ASEAN has affirmed that the benefits of growth must be shared equitably and sustainably across all segments of society. These principles are enshrined in Articles 35, 36, and 37 of the AHRD, which affirm the right to development as a fundamental human right.

Peace is also indispensable to the region. The absence of violence, conflict, and civil unrest is essential for fostering a sense of safety, enabling individuals and communities to fully engage in civic, economic, and social life, such as to access education and healthcare, and fully participate in society. The right to peace — and to enjoy peace — is central to building inclusive, resilient societies, and to achieving SDGs.

Given this, AICHR considered it opportune to deepen the mainstreaming of both rights within the ASEAN Community. In this context, Malaysia in 2025 introduced the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development.

The proposed declaration articulates the linkage between development, peace, and the rights-based approach foundational to ASEAN’s human rights agenda. The Declaration seeks to operationalise Articles 35 to 38 of the AHRD, anchoring them in ASEAN’s long-term vision of fostering a people-centred Community as envisioned by the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045*.

This proposed declaration emphasises that the right to development includes the right of every person in ASEAN to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from sustainable economic, social, cultural, and political development. Importantly, it connects this right with the pursuit of peace — not only the absence of conflict, but also the conditions that foster justice, equality, and enduring harmony. AICHR sees this dual commitment as essential for building resilient, inclusive communities.

The proposed declaration provides a framework for AICHR to robustly advance SDGs through a uniquely ASEAN-led, ASEAN-owned and whole-of-ASEAN model for development and peace, mainstream inclusive growth and sustainable development into ASEAN’s human rights mechanisms, enhance cross-pillar cooperation across the three ASEAN

Communities, and position AICHR and ASEAN as global leaders in promoting rights-based, sustainable development. Moreover, this initiative develops pathways for AICHR to address emerging and complex challenges — including climate change, environmental degradation, and the risks of unsustainable development — by grounding responses in human rights principles.

In November 2019, AICHR held its first regional consultation on the right to development in Jakarta, Indonesia. The meeting explored the conceptual underpinnings of the right, assessed its historical evolution, and reviewed ASEAN’s progress. Building on this foundation, Malaysia convened the second regional consultation on 28 April 2025 to deepen ASEAN’s understanding of the right to development and facilitate consensus building toward a unified regional approach.

Through these two declarations, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to building a just, peaceful, and sustainable region for all its peoples.

## **8.2 AICHR’s 4<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Work Plan for the Period from 2026 to 2030**

Since its establishment in 2009, AICHR has adopted three FYWPs to guide its programming in implementing its mandates. The work plans set AICHR’s strategic direction and detail AICHR’s priority areas, indicative activities, and expected outputs. The current FYWP concludes in 2025.

The upcoming FYWP commences in 2026. Given that it has been fifteen years since AICHR was established, AICHR’s long-term programmatic perspective will allow AICHR to be responsive, inclusive, relevant, agile, innovative, decisive and future-ready in addressing regional human rights challenges.

This perspective is aligned with the *ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future* and ASEAN principles of consensus, unity, and Centrality.

To this end, AICHR hosted its first-ever regional consultation to support the development of the new FYWP in line with the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045* on 29 April 2025. Led by Malaysia and jointly supported by Thailand, Lao PDR, Indonesia and Singapore, the consultation was a platform for stakeholders to discuss and provide input on AICHR's future programming. It also provided an open and safe space for crucial dialogue on how AICHR can strengthen its human rights efforts and position itself among the leading commissions globally, while remaining relevant to current challenges.

Further, the ASEAN Secretariat has completed the final review of the AICHR FYWP 2021–2025 to assess the overall progress, achievements, and results of its implementation, as well as to identify key challenges and provide recommendations to enhance human rights cooperation within ASEAN. Covering the period from January 2021 to February 2025, the review examined the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency of AICHR's work and initiatives and evaluated their contribution to ASEAN's broader strategic objectives. Its comprehensive overview served as a foundation for the development of the new FYWP 2026–2030 while providing forward-looking recommendations to guide AICHR's strategic planning aligned with ASEAN's evolving human rights agenda.

AICHR received numerous views from the relevant discussions, consultations and reviews, including the following:

1. Thematic sustainability and continuity: Ensure continuity in thematic priorities to allow AICHR to assess the sustained influence of its initiatives over time, through impact tracking. Define clear and measurable impact

indicators linked to outcomes. Prioritise depth over breadth.

2. Institutional strengthening and cross-pillar coordination: Expand the role of the ASEAN Secretariat for better coordination between ASEAN pillars. Additionally, the Secretariat should play a greater role in facilitating stakeholder engagement, streamlining reporting and monitoring processes, and supporting the implementation of AICHR's human rights initiatives through structured coordination frameworks.
3. Enhanced monitoring and evaluation framework: Institutionalise outcome-oriented monitoring and evaluation frameworks and long-term impact evaluation, implement periodic independent evaluations to enhance transparency and credibility, and ensure objectivity and accountability. Establish a standardised reporting mechanism across AMS to enable more consistent evaluation, facilitate comparative analysis, and strengthen accountability.
4. Communications management system: Institutionalise a more structured and direct approach to addressing communications and set up frameworks that ensure broad acceptance among AMS.
5. Review and update focus areas in the FYWP: Refine the FYWP by discontinuing outdated programmes and integrating emerging traditional and non-traditional concerns and threats to human rights.
6. Proactive leadership for emerging human rights challenges: Enhance discussion on emerging human rights challenges in the region posed by traditional and non-traditional security threats.
7. Greater engagement with relevant stakeholders: Strengthen and broaden

engagement with NHRIs, CSOs, rights-holders and stakeholders to enhance outcomes and impact, including policy adoption rates and regional cooperation.

8. Comprehensive data collection system: Establish a comprehensive and accurate data collection system to monitor and address human rights issues and enable comparative assessments and long-term tracking of progress. This is crucial to improving the accuracy and effectiveness of human rights responses, ensuring better-informed decision making, and enhancing accountability.
9. With regard to AICHR's Terms of Reference, to follow up on the 52<sup>nd</sup> AMM in July 2019 for the convening of a panel of experts to discuss the matter, including the proposed areas to be reviewed, and to submit a recommendation to the AMM for further guidance and approval.

As ASEAN continues to confront complex and rapidly evolving challenges, AICHR has a unique opportunity to lead with vision and purpose, and a pivotal role to play in promoting and protecting human rights throughout ASEAN. AICHR's next FYWP prioritises foresight, policy coherence, and adaptability to evolving regional dynamics, and lays the groundwork for a more resilient, inclusive, rights-based, and people-centred ASEAN community.

### 8.3

#### **AICHR Advancing Pathways and Approaches to Peace in ASEAN**

For the first time, AICHR is undertaking a focused initiative on the intersection of peace, conflict, and human rights. This landmark programme comprises a series of six interlinked and progressive workshops scheduled from July to December 2025.

ASEAN has historically played a central role in conflict prevention, management, and peacebuilding across Southeast Asia. Its approach — grounded in the principles of non-interference, consensus-based decision making, and respect for sovereignty — has prioritised informal dialogue, quiet diplomacy, and regional consensus over direct intervention in internal affairs. These principles have underpinned ASEAN's ability to manage cross-border tensions and maintain regional stability.

However, the evolving human rights landscape presents the growing need to strengthen ASEAN's institutional response to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As such, AICHR has launched a transformative initiative comprising six thematic workshops designed to build a shared, human rights-based approach to peace and conflict in the region. The programme will support ASEAN to develop possible actionable frameworks and pathways for the organisation to address peace and conflict through a human rights lens. Each session will serve as a structured platform for expert exchange, inclusive dialogue, and collaborative planning.

This initiative supports AICHR's strategies on cooperation, policy development, and multi-stakeholder engagement while contributing directly to the implementation of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security 2022 and ASEAN Declaration on the Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society 2017.

The outcomes of this pioneering series will not only enrich ASEAN's institutional memory but also strengthen its collective capacity to uphold peace, protect rights, and foster regional resilience in the face of emerging challenges.

## 9

# Key Observations

Since its establishment, AICHR has undertaken sustained efforts to promote and protect human rights in ASEAN through a range of strategic initiatives — work that has progressed amid both achievements and accolades, and ongoing challenges and criticisms. Recognising the importance of continual improvement and adopting an evolutionary approach, AICHR has engaged in regular self-assessments to reflect on its performance and identify ways to strengthen its mandate and functions.

Recent assessments include the “Regional Dialogue: Self-Assessment of AICHR Progress After 10 Years,” held over three sessions between 2021 and 2022, and the ASEAN Secretariat’s final review of the AICHR FYWP 2021–2025. The ASEAN Secretariat’s *Information Paper on the Work of the AICHR 2010–2024* also explored AICHR’s progress, achievements and challenges.

Numerous insightful observations have emerged from these evaluations, including the following highlights on AICHR’s accomplishments:

1. Improved regional policy uptake: AMS have improved policy adoption and alignment due to AICHR’s consistent engagements and dialogue sessions.
2. Mainstreaming human rights considerations into policy areas: There has been greater engagement with ASBs, both those directly and indirectly related to human rights, fostering stronger institutional collaboration with AICHR.
3. Strengthened cross-sectoral partnership: There has been increased collaboration — such as with the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW), and ACWC — leading to more coordinated efforts to strengthen policy coordination across sectoral bodies.
4. Progress on human rights and the environment, and the rights to development and peace: Progress has been made towards establishing a consensus on these rights through two proposed ASEAN declarations and strengthening of their interpretations through increased consultations and collaborative frameworks with AMS representatives.
5. Expanded stakeholder engagement and capacity building: Broader involvement of ASBs and external partners in programmatic activities. Formalisation of CSO consultative relationships has substantially improved stakeholder participation.
6. Communications-based modality: Greater attention has been given to communications received on human rights issues. The practice of receipt and forwarding of the communications to relevant bodies, such as AMS agencies and NHRIs, strengthens AICHR’s role in regional human rights grievance responses.
7. Digital governance and artificial intelligence ethics leadership: Successful initiation of regional discussions on issues such as digital rights and governance, artificial intelligence, and misinformation and disinformation, to demonstrate AICHR’s growing capacity to address contemporary regional issues.
8. Voluntary reporting on recent human rights developments in ASEAN at AICHR



meetings: Increased participation and broader thematic areas are being reported at AICHR meetings through the recent human rights developments agenda item, including discussions on responses to regional human rights issues, particularly during crises.

These developments indicate important progress. They must be viewed as foundations rather than endpoints. AICHR aims to build on this momentum with greater urgency and ambition to become a more effective, robust, and accountable guardian of human rights in the region.

Alongside these achievements, we note the following:

1. Mandates: The mandate to draft the AHRD pursuant to paragraph 4.2 of AICHR's Terms of Reference has been completed.
2. Gap in work plans and deliverables: Disparity between planned initiatives and achievable outcomes may affect AICHR's work from being effectively translated into action on the ground.
3. Monitoring and reporting frameworks for AICHR activities: Focusing on outcomes and impact in advancing AICHR's mandates.

4. Structured communications mechanisms: To enhance institutional effectiveness, there should be a mechanism with clear follow-up procedures to handle communications.

These observations can be considered in enhancing AICHR's role in addressing regional human rights challenges and projecting the ASEAN position on the issues, as guided by AICHR's mandates.

ASEAN Leaders have called on ASEAN institutions to be more decisive, responsive and timely as well as future-ready in addressing challenges. AICHR intends to meet this call, aligning efforts mindful of the principle of inclusivity to strengthen AICHR's capacity and enhance its effectiveness consistent with the *ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future*.

Further, the healthy and constructive deliberations among AICHR Representatives to develop two proposed declarations evidence the active, evolutionary and consultative approach that can be impactful for the benefit of the ASEAN peoples. The continuing debate on a more balanced discharge of AICHR's mandates is to be viewed in the way they are operationalised through AICHR's programmes and practices, such as the ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue.

# 10

## The Possibilities: Future Direction for Further Consideration

The *ASEAN Community Vision 2045* envisages a Community that is anchored on ASEAN Centrality with enhanced institutional capacity and effectiveness with ASEAN organs, bodies and mechanisms that are more decisive, responsive and timely as well as future-ready in addressing global and regional challenges, supported by a strengthened ASEAN Secretariat, with effective cross-sectoral and cross-pillar coordination. ASEAN also endeavours to strengthen its institutions and refresh processes to be more resilient, innovative, agile, adaptive, responsive, and decisive in addressing increasing cross-cutting issues. This includes arriving at decisions on urgent and specific situations in a timely manner and promoting greater synergy and coordination in cross-sectoral and cross-pillar issues.

AICHR's future direction rests on adopting and integrating a long-term programmatic

perspective to AICHR's planning of activities and implementation. It would include phasing out outdated focus areas and programmes, and prioritising emerging traditional and non-traditional issues such as artificial intelligence, digital governance, climate change, and business and human rights.

Responding directly to the accomplishments, gaps, and challenges identified, and offering additional measures to support AICHR's ongoing development, the following matters could be considered:

1. Broaden and strengthen stakeholder engagement, including with non-governmental organisations, civil society, private sector, and NHRIs, where applicable and as agreed upon by AICHR, in supporting AICHR's efforts to fulfil its mandate under its Terms of Reference.





2. Leverage academic and policy expertise by exploring increasing engagement with academic institutions and think tanks concerned with human rights promotion and protection, and conducting targeted capacity building through peer-learning and knowledge-sharing exchanges among AMS.
  3. Undertake, on a voluntary basis and by invitation, AMS country visits that can serve as a platform for sharing information and best practices, supporting the broader goals of human rights cooperation and dialogue.
  4. Develop sustainable funding models and strengthen financial mechanisms.
  5. Create a digital knowledge hub to document good practices from AMS in treaty implementation, rights education, and inclusive policymaking.
  6. Take stock, where appropriate, of ASEAN instruments related to human rights towards enhancing the promotion of their full implementation, while considering the possibility of developing new instruments on matters of mutual interest among AMS.
  7. Update AICHR's Terms of Reference, as necessary, to align with the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045* and its Strategic Plans.
  8. Enhance AICHR's technical assistance and advisory role on human rights matters, including emerging human rights challenges, for cross-sectoral cooperation pursuant to paragraph 4.7 of AICHR's Terms of Reference.
  9. Articulate, where applicable, expressions of consensus on human rights issues through AICHR statements, not limited to ASEAN declarations. This includes statements of concern on human rights, such as possible joint statements with ASBs on thematic issues.
- Taken together, the above reflect a call for a more strategic, responsive, inclusive, accountable and future-oriented regional human rights mechanism, and guide AICHR's continued evolution, strengthen AICHR's performance to achieve its purposes, and support ASEAN in advancing a more coherent, rights-based regional agenda. If implemented, they will contribute towards realising the *ASEAN Community Vision 2045*.

## Press Releases

During the reporting period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, AICHR issued the following press releases, which can be found on the AICHR website.

### Press Release of the Special Meeting 1/2024 of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)



The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened the Special Meeting 1/2024 of AICHR from 23 to 26 July 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy, Representative of Lao PDR, and Chair of AICHR in 2024, and was attended by Representatives / Alternate Representatives of AICHR, and the ASEAN Secretariat. Timor-Leste attended the Meeting as Observer.

The Meeting was updated on recent developments on human rights in the region, including new laws and regulations at the national level related to human rights, and human rights initiatives by ASEAN Member States

as presented by the AICHR Representatives of Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore, respectively.

The Meeting discussed the progressive implementation of AICHR's Priority Programmes / Activities, including business and human rights, the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, trafficking in persons, youth debate on human rights, prevention of torture, and implementation of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations. The Meeting deliberated initiatives to enhance the engagement of AICHR with ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and

entities, relevant stakeholders, and dialogue partners, including the preparation for the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue and an official visit of AICHR to China.

The Meeting commenced discussions on the next Five-Year Work Plan of AICHR for the period of 2026-2030.

On 24 July, the AICHR Representatives had their annual Interface with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers during the 57<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM) and Related Meetings. The Interface saw candid exchanges between the Ministers / Deputy Ministers and the AICHR Representatives on progress and ongoing efforts to promote and protect human rights in the region. The Chair of AICHR delivered AICHR's Statement and submitted AICHR's Annual Report 2024 to the 57<sup>th</sup> AMM during the Interface.

## **AICHR Hosts the ASEAN Forum on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly**



BANTEN, 26 July 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) conducted an ASEAN Forum on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly to promote the implementation of Article 24 of the ASEAN

The AICHR Representatives also held their annual Interface with the Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn. The parties shared views and deliberations on AICHR's ongoing works for the advancement of human rights cooperation and dialogue in ASEAN.

On 25 July, AICHR met with the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group (AER-WG) and expressed appreciation for their work. AICHR also met with the Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum (SEANF), which shared experiences and discussed possible areas of mutual interest for cooperation.

The Meeting expressed its appreciation to AICHR Lao PDR and the ASEAN Secretariat for the excellent arrangements of the meeting.

Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) on 15–16 July 2024 in Banten, Indonesia.

The purposes of the Forum were to provide a platform for sharing measures and building the

capacity of relevant actors on the implementation of Article 24 of AHRD on the right to peaceful assembly. The Forum also aimed to establish a platform to improve the skills and knowledge of the practitioners in implementing Article 24 of AHRD.

During the Forum, the Representative of Indonesia to AICHR, Wahyuningrum, emphasised the importance of ensuring the protection of the right to peaceful assembly, whether in various settings including; outdoors, indoors, online; in public and private spaces; or a combination thereof. She further emphasised that the right to peaceful assembly cannot be fully secured unless other rights, such as freedom of expression, association, and participation, are also protected.

Ambassador Chilman Arisman from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia underscored that the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly are very central components of ASEAN as a people-centred community, to express their aspirations, as part of the fulfilment of their rights towards equitable social progress.

The Forum was attended by more than 60 participants who participated in both online and in-person formats. Participants shared best practices and challenges in upholding the right to freedom of assembly in ASEAN member states and discussed challenges in exercising such rights in different contexts such as in their work of countering violent extremism, trafficking in persons, promoting the rights of migrant

workers and refugees, children, women and persons with disabilities as well as in promoting freedom of expression, religion and belief.

Participants also discussed some restrictions and procedural issues on the implementation of the right to freedom of assembly and came up with some recommendations for AICHR:

- to raise awareness on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and facilitate a regular dialogue among policymakers and practitioners to exchange experiences as well as best practices in managing freedom of peaceful assembly.
- to consider developing guidelines on how to tackle unrest situations / rallies for law enforcement officers.
- to encourage ASEAN member states to apply a human rights-based approach in policing assemblies.

The UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association, Gina Paola Romero, gave a specific session on the *Practical Toolkit for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests* in the Forum.

AICHR Indonesia and Thailand organised the Forum with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, demonstrating a collective commitment to advancing human rights with the ASEAN Region.

## AICHR Hosts Dialogue on Realising Southeast Asia as a Torture-Free Region



BANTEN, 22 August 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) conducted an ASEAN Dialogue on Realising Southeast Asia as a Torture-Free Region in Banten on 20-21 August.

The dialogue aimed to provide a platform to share measures and enhance capacity building for the police officers, security forces, and other law enforcement officers in Southeast Asia on the use of Mendez Principles, Istanbul Protocol, Tokyo Rules, and Bangkok Rules. Additionally, it sought to develop comprehensive recommendations for the implementation of Article 14 of the AHRD focusing on prevention, investigation, prosecution, and rehabilitation.

Wahyuningrum, the representative of Indonesia to AICHR, stated in her opening remarks that holding the annual Dialogue on Realising Southeast Asia as a Torture-Free Region reflects ASEAN's commitment to the

universal consensus that torture is an egregious violation of human dignity. Mathias Domenig, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Switzerland in Indonesia, emphasised the importance of collaboration in exploring more ethical alternatives toward achieving a world without torture.

Lorraine Finlay, Human Rights Commissioner from Australia's Human Rights Commission, underscored that torture is indefensible from an ethical perspective and unreliable and ineffective in the outcomes it produces, but also it undermines the efforts to make our communities feel safer and to build public confidence in police and law enforcement agencies.

More than 80 participants from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Police, ASEAN Member States (AMS) and ASEAN sectoral bodies attended the Dialogue.

The dialogue applied various methodologies such as plenary, group discussion, case study scenarios and film discussion.

In the two-day dialogue, participants discussed progress in compliance with the UN Convention Against Torture; deliberated on the contribution of the national human rights institutions; shared practices and lessons learnt on the effective investigative interview, including approaches in interviewing child victims, witnesses and children alleged to have or accused of having committed crime-related offences and gender dimension; and the use of film to improve the prison condition in AMS.

## **AICHR-SOMTC to Develop Regional Guideline on the Non-Punishment Principle for Victims of Trafficking in Persons**

TANGERANG, 4 September 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Senior Official Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) co-organised the Validation Workshop on the Development of Regional Guideline on the Non-Punishment Principle for Victims of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in ASEAN on 2–3 September.

The workshop, held in Tangerang, Indonesia, aimed to gather feedback from stakeholders, practitioners, and ASEAN sectoral bodies on the draft of regional guideline for implementing the non-punishment principle for victims of TIP in ASEAN Member States (AMS).

The workshop acted as a follow-up from the *Consultation to Share Best Practices and Challenges in Implementing Non-Punishment Principles in the Anti-TIP Laws, Policies and Practices of ASEAN Member States* which took place in June 2024 in Bali. It was an implementation of the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Work Plan Against Trafficking in Persons 2023-2028 and AICHR Five-Year Work Plan 2021-2025, and the realisation of the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking

This dialogue is the implementation of the AICHR Five-Year Work Plan 2021-2025 and coherence with the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025 as well as the joint activity between the AICHR and the Southeast Asian National Human Rights Institution Forum.

This dialogue is organised in partnership with the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and supported by the Australian Human Rights Commission and Switzerland Embassy in Jakarta.

in Persons, especially Women and Children (ACTIP).

Highlighting the importance of taking a human rights approach to counter TIP, Wahyuningrum, Representative of Indonesia to AICHR, said that the non-punishment principle is a concept in human rights and criminal law that ensures victims, particularly those of human trafficking and exploitation, are not prosecuted or penalised for unlawful acts they were compelled to commit as a result of their victimisation.

Moreover, Assistant Secretary Lilian M. de Leon, Representative of SOMTC Philippines and Lead Shepherd on TIP, said that the non-punishment principle is a cornerstone in ensuring that victims are treated with dignity and respect and that they are not further victimised by the legal and administrative processes. During the workshop, Assistant Director Ronaldo C. Cusi also served as co-chair on behalf of SOMTC Philippines.

More than 50 participants representing AICHR, SOMTC, and Task Forces to



counter-trafficking in persons in AMS, civil society organisations, and international organisations, attended the workshop and provided inputs to the draft of the regional guideline on the non-punishment principle for victims of TIP.

They discussed applying the non-punishment principle in victims’ screening and identification; when victims are on trial; when victims have been

convicted; and monitoring the implementation of the non-punishment principle in TIP.

The consultation is initiated by AICHR Indonesia and SOMTC Philippines in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, supported by the Australian Government funded ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking programme (ASEAN-ACT).

## **AICHR, SEANF Co-Host Regional Workshop on Sharing Good Practices, Effective Remedy for Migrant Workers**

BANGKOK, 1 October 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum (SEANF) co-hosted “AICHR-SEANF Regional Workshop: Sharing Good Practices and Effective Remedy for Migrant Workers in Business and Human Rights in ASEAN” on 24 September.

The workshop was attended by AICHR, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), ASEAN sectoral bodies, regional stakeholders including the business community, international

experts, and civil society organisations. At the workshop, participants took the opportunity to update on the progress and exchange views on the strategies to advance the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) in the region.

The meeting focused on good practices and effective remedies for migrant workers in business contexts, the efforts by NHRIs to promote remedies, and the corporate performance in context of transnational human rights impacts.

The meeting also addressed progress of UNGPs implementation in Japan, the roles of private sector in promoting non-state, non-judicial remedies, and the challenges faced by migrant workers in accessing justice.

Experts and participants exchanged views on good practices to move forwards, including to develop and to integrate UNGPs and international standards into national policies and regulations, to enhance stakeholder engagement and public participation in business and human rights initiatives, to strengthen support and safeguards for vulnerable groups, including migrant workers, among others.

Over 140 participants from across the region attended the one-day programme regional workshop, which was conducted as part of the 2024 United Nations Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum conducted by the United Nations agencies from 23-27 September.

The meeting addressed challenges of the current and future remedy programmes,

for instance, to streamline access to justice mechanisms for migrant workers, to strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks to protect environmental rights, to enhance capacities of justice sector institutions to address business-related human rights violations, and to improve legal empowerment and aid for communities affected by business operations.

Aiming to promote effective remedies in the region, participants exchanged views on the development of a regional framework for addressing transboundary human rights impacts by businesses and to strengthen regional cooperation on migrant worker protection and rights.

AICHR and SEANF hosted the event with the support from the Japanese Government through Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), the European Union (EU), the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



## AICHR Philippines Hosts 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Dialogue on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



MANILA, 3 October 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Philippines, in partnership with the Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia), conducted the 5<sup>th</sup> Dialogue on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) on 2-3 October 2024 in Makati, Philippines, and via video conference. The Dialogue was made possible through the help of the United Nations Children’s Fund East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF-EAPRO), Save the Children Asia Regional Office, World Wide Fund (WWF), and support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and Plan International.

This year’s iteration of the dialogue tackled the latest General Comment No. 26 (GC 26) on children’s rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change. It was attended by over 80 participants onsite and online, including Representatives from AICHR, ASEAN Committee on the Promotion

and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), stakeholders and child rights advocates from various government agencies, international organizations, national human rights institutions, and civil society organizations.

DSWD Assistant Secretary Juan Carlo Marquez delivered the keynote address. Meanwhile, the opening remarks were given by AICHR Philippines Representative Angelito A. Nayan, and CRC Asia Regional Executive Director Amihan Abueva. The speakers welcomed the localization and strengthened integration of the General Comment into the policy-making process throughout the regional and national levels while also acknowledging the realities of young people in ASEAN, being a climate-vulnerable region.

Former UN CRC Committee Chair and current Member Atty. Mikiko Otani discussed various instruments and tools in relation to the framework of children’s rights through the lens of environmental issues that threaten the future

generation. UN CRC Committee Member Prof. Thuwayba Al Barwani also shared salient features of the GC 26 which examined the consultative process of the committee, highlighting children’s call for bold and urgent action to address the climate crisis.

UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change Elisa Morgera discussed the differentiated impact of human rights and intersectionality, therefore impacting action. Subsequently, the discussions focused on the children’s significant role in environmental protection and activism, which were given unique emphasis by the participation of three children speakers, Fah, Sofia, and Nina, who shared their respective advocacies and experiences in addressing the climate crisis.

Participants also explored the ethical obligations of the private sector in upholding

human and children’s rights, urging an immediate shift from “business as usual” to escalate a healthy and sustainable environment for generations to come. Similar to the remarkable efforts of the ASEAN, the sessions concluded with the suggestion of establishing a working group willing to stand with children and civil society, integrating into a regional plan of action.

This Dialogue began in 2018 and continues to reaffirm AICHR’s ongoing efforts to promote children’s rights in ASEAN by working together with child rights organizations such as CRC Asia, by integrating children’s rights in the policy-making process, and coordination of various sectoral bodies. It focuses on sharing best practices and addressing emerging challenges faced by the region in implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by all ASEAN Member States.

## **ASEAN Regional Dialogue Focuses on Sharing Best Practices on Enhancing Human Rights During COVID-19**

PHNOM PENH, 29 October 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened the Regional Dialogue: Sharing Good Practices on Enhancing Human Rights during the Covid-19 Pandemic in ASEAN, on 28-29 October in Cambodia.

The dialogue aimed to 1) provide a platform for discussions among relevant and multi-stakeholders in sharing experiences and crisis response related to the COVID-19 pandemic and identifying areas of future cooperation and 2) document best practices in addressing human rights within identified thematic and cross-cutting areas during the pandemic in the ASEAN region.

The objectives of the two-day event aligned with the “ASEAN Community Vision 2025:

Forging Ahead Together”, the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025, and the Five-Year Work Plan of the AICHR 2021-2025.

In his welcoming remarks, Keo Remy, Senior Minister, President of the Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC) and the Representative of Cambodia to the AICHR, discussed the importance of human rights, particularly the right to life, and the repercussions of the pandemic on this right. He stated that “the disruptive impacts of the pandemic have made all countries in the world issue diverse preventive and protective measures to ensure protection for people’s lives and national stability.”

He highlighted that in safeguarding the right to life during the pandemic, the Cambodian government established essential measures, notably the government’s vaccination policy,



which has been successfully executed and praised by peer countries along with the World Health Organization.

Senior Minister Keo Remy underlined the significant support China has catered to Cambodia, including the donation of medical supplies and the provision of vaccinations, which enabled Cambodia to safeguard millions of lives. He pinpointed that “such demonstration emphasises the solidarity and cooperation between Cambodia and China in times of crisis as well as reinforces China’s support in the region as a key ally during global emergencies.”

The dialogue was also graced by Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy, Chair and Representative of Lao PDR to the AICHR. Ambassador Chanthalangsy reaffirmed, “As Chair of ASEAN in 2024, the Lao PDR has taken a proactive stance, prioritising health resilience and focusing on strategies to bolster the region’s capacity to prevent and handle future economic, social, cultural and health impacts in case of crisis in our region.”

He also highlighted ASEAN’s commitments and initiatives aimed at realisation of the right to life, right to health, and ASEAN’s strategies, by stating “the pandemic’s multidimensional

impact necessitated a strategic and collaborative approach by ASEAN. In November 2020, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the ASEAN COVID-19 Recovery Framework. With its five broad strategies, this framework was crucial in mitigating the crisis’s socio-economic impacts.”

Ambassador Chanthalangsy also drew the point on the One Health Initiative spearheaded by Indonesia, the vital interconnections between people’s health and environmental, and climate change. He continued his address by thanking China’s support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Underscoring how the government’s public policies worked during the pandemic, Chang Jian, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China to Cambodia accentuated that “people come first” and that “a responsible government leaves no one behind” and emphasised that “the Royal Government’s COVID policies placed people first.” He recalled how expatriates were taken care of in the vaccination programme in Cambodia. He fondly stated that “we will always remember His Majesty the King and Her Majesty Queen Mother, Samdech Techo Hun Sen and the Cambodian people gave valuable support to China in early 2020.”

The Dialogue delineated best practices and challenges pertaining to the enhancing of (i) the right to health, (ii) the right to quality and access education, (iii) labor rights, (iv) the rights to information and privacy, and (v) social protection responses during and post-covid-19 pandemic, aligning with the objectives of the Dialogue.

The participants and experts explored potential avenues for the AICHR, other pertinent ASEAN bodies, and stakeholders to help mainstream the right to health and quality education in the ASEAN community, as well as address challenges and best practices for labor rights and the rights to information and privacy, and discuss in-depth the future of social protection responses.

As the host, Long Sonita, Alternate Representative of Cambodia to the AICHR, concluded the event by expressing confidence that this Dialogue would be a powerful platform to further strengthen regional cooperation on human rights across various domains during and after pandemic. The Alternate Representative also expressed her appreciation and gratitude toward the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund for its consistent support of AICHR activities.

The dialogue gathered nearly one hundred participants from the ASEAN Member States, the Representatives of AICHR, the ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, ASEAN Secretariat, National Human Rights Institutions in ASEAN, Representatives from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cambodia, UNICEF, International Labour Organisation and experts from ASEAN, China and Japan.

Also present were the national ministries and institutions including Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Ministry of Planning, National Social Protection Council, Cambodian National Council for Children and the Cambodian Human Rights Committee.

The event was organised by AICHR-Cambodia and financially supported by the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund (ACCF) and AICHR Fund.





Following the adoption of the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on the ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue during the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue on 5 November 2024 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The Delegates who attended the Dialogue comprised representatives of the ASEAN Member States (AMS), AICHR, the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN, and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) from some AMS, and invited stakeholders including the civil society organisations (CSOs) having consultative relationship with AICHR, and the ASEAN Secretariat. Timor-Leste attended the Dialogue as Observer.

The opening session was honoured by the presence of H.E. Arrmanatha Nasir, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia; H.E. Mugiyanto Sipin, Vice-Minister of Human

Rights of Indonesia; H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy, Representative of Lao PDR to AICHR and Chair of AICHR for 2024; and H.E. Wahyuningrum, Representative of Indonesia to AICHR. In their remarks and keynote speeches, the dignitaries highlighted that the ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue plays an important role in the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN.

It serves as a form of cooperative forum for dialogue on human rights thematic issues of AMS to share human rights progresses and challenges in a culture of openness, constructiveness and mutual understanding. By ensuring the participation of diverse stakeholders, including government representatives, national human rights institutions, and civil society organisations, the Dialogue promotes inclusivity in addressing human rights issues within the ASEAN region and beyond.

The Delegates exchanged new normative frameworks and policy developments, as well as

best practices in AMS to promote and protect human rights and ways to overcome challenges to implement the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD).

The Delegates also shared experiences on the accession and implementation of the international human rights treaties by the AMS including reporting requirements and follow-ups on recommendations, as well as their participation in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

Thematic discussions during the Dialogue covered the issues of the rights of migrant workers, women, children, and persons with disabilities, gender equality, business and human rights, freedom of religion and belief, protection of journalists, human rights past abuses, death penalty, the environment and climate change, online sexual violence against children, digital rights, disinformation and misinformation, basic principles for treatment of prisoners, access to justice, prevention of torture, and sustainable development goals, among others.

## **AICHR Regional Dialogue and Consultation on Advancing Development of Environmental Rights Concludes**

JAKARTA, 8 November 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened AICHR Regional Dialogue and Consultation on Advancing Development of Environmental Rights in ASEAN, at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat.

The regional dialogue provided a platform for AICHR and ASEAN sectoral bodies as well as national and relevant stakeholders for consultation and exchanges on environmental issues facing ASEAN at present and in the future.

Over 60 participants attended, including representatives from AICHR, ASOEN,

The Dialogue stimulated constructive discussion, deliberation and exercise of mutual respect and understanding. Stakeholders such as NHRIs and CSOs were engaged and shared their views and recommendations towards improving cooperation and enhancing capacity to better promote and protect human rights.

In commemoration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of AICHR on 23 October 2024 and the 12th anniversary of the AHRD on 18 November 2024, the Delegates reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights in the region in line with the AHRD and the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the AHRD.

The 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue was jointly chaired by AICHR Indonesia and Lao PDR, with the support of the ASEAN Secretariat.

relevant ASEAN Working Groups, the ASEAN Secretariat, AMS government agencies, civil society organizations, ASEAN Youth Forum, ASEAN Disability Forum, National Human Rights Institutions, UN entities, and experts in environmental law.

The meeting took stock of ASEAN environment cooperation and progress in promoting the environmental rights. The delegates shared experiences on the implementation of ASEAN and global instruments and / or agreements on issues related to environment at the national level, on the implementation of ASEAN Community Vision 2025 on cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration on environment-related issues,



as well as on the challenges and successes in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals on environmental issues.

Participants reaffirmed the important link between the environment and full enjoyment of human rights protection. The discussion highlighted on national and regional standard setting, addressing transboundary impact, accountability, public participation, access to justice, the business sector responsibilities, and importance of multi-stakeholder platforms in mainstreaming a rights-based approach to environmental protection in ASEAN.

Among the lessons learned and best practices shared, the meeting acknowledged and

expressed support to further collaborate on the development of the draft ASEAN Declaration on the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

In her closing remark, Prof. Dr. Amara Pongsapich, Thailand's representative to the AICHR, expressed gratitude for the collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and development partners, including the Swedish International Development (SIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR).

## **Press Release of the Special Meeting 2/2024 of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)**

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened the Special Meeting 2/2024 of AICHR from 13 to 15 November 2024 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy, Representative of Lao PDR to AICHR, and Chair of AICHR in

2024, and was attended by Representatives / Alternate Representatives of AICHR, and the ASEAN Secretariat. Timor-Leste attended the Meeting as Observer.

During the meeting, AICHR received updates on recent human rights developments

across the ASEAN region, new national laws, regulations and developments presented by AICHR Representatives from Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Singapore. Recent developments across the three ASEAN Community pillars, such as on sustainability agenda, climate change, and digitalisation, among others, were also highlighted.

The Meeting discussed the implementation of AICHR's Priority Programmes and Activities for 2024 and 2025, with a particular focus on thematic areas such as the right to development, the right to peace, the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities, human rights and policing, prevention of torture, combatting trafficking in persons, business and human rights, and matters concerning rights of migrant workers and youth engagement. During its deliberations, the meeting reiterated the importance of strengthening cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration to address growing challenges in the region and effectively support ASEAN Community-building initiatives.

AICHR also deliberated on the outline and timeline for the development of the AICHR

Five-Year Work Plan 2026–2030 and discussed the modalities of a working group established by AICHR. Furthermore, to ensure the continuity of AICHR's work, AICHR discussed arrangements for a transition workshop between the outgoing AICHR Representatives (2022–2024) and incoming AICHR Representatives (2025–2027), to take place in early 2025.

On 14 November 2024, AICHR held its first meeting with the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and Related Transnational Crime (RSO), aimed at exploring synergies and identifying areas of mutual interest for potential cooperation.

The Meeting concluded with a handover ceremony of the AICHR Chairmanship from Lao PDR to Malaysia. The Meeting expressed appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy and the national Secretariat for excellent arrangements and leadership as the Chair of AICHR in 2024 and welcomed Malaysia as the incoming Chair of AICHR in 2025.



## AICHR Hosts First ASEAN Dialogue on Human Rights and Policing



BALI, 4 December 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened the first ASEAN Dialogue on Human Rights and Policing in Bali on 2-3 December, marking a significant milestone in advancing human rights-based policing across the ASEAN region.

Representatives from ASEAN Member States' National Police Forces, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Commission of National Police, civil society organisations, academes, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Australian Federal Police, and ASEANAPOL attended the dialogue that aims to promote police integrity, professionalism, and adherence to international human rights standards.

The event is a vital step in operationalising the AICHR's Five-Year Work Plan (2021–2025), focusing on strengthening governance through human rights-based approaches.

During the opening session, Wahyuningrum, Indonesia's Representative to AICHR, emphasised that police officers, as frontline

representatives of state authority, play a dual role: ensuring public safety and upholding human rights. She noted that policing and human rights are inseparable; therefore, dialogue is important for fostering trust, accountability, and professionalism in law enforcement across ASEAN.

Echoing this sentiment, Nanda Avalist of Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighted the importance of training and clear guidelines for law enforcement to exercise discretion responsibly, ensuring that human rights are protected even in complex scenarios. Likewise, police training is key to preventing torture and building public trust in law enforcement, said Tessa Nerini, from the Embassy of Switzerland.

The Australian Ambassador to ASEAN, Tiffany McDonald, highlighted Australia's long-standing partnership with ASEAN and the importance of integrating human rights into law enforcement. She further said that policing as a public service emphasises safety, security, and human rights for all individuals without discrimination.

The event brought together over 80 participants, including in-person and virtual attendees, with representation from police forces across ASEAN Member States, the Australian Federal Police, and civil society organisations.

Key themes explored during the dialogue included addressing gender-based violence and ensuring ethical treatment of detainees, promoting community policing strategies to protect human rights defenders and uphold freedoms, and enhancing transparency and accountability in law enforcement practices.

As the dialogue progressed, participants were encouraged to share best practices, exchange perspectives, and develop innovative solutions to common challenges. ASEAN is forging a path toward a more humane, professional, and accountable policing system. Participating countries reaffirmed their commitment to aligning policing practices with the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) and international standards such as the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.

The two-day dialogue culminated in the development of a roadmap for collaborative

strategies to enhance human rights-based policing in ASEAN, including strengthening cooperation with NHRIs and civil society, as follows:

- Reviewing and improving the existing code of conduct of the national police of ASEAN member states.
- Increasing women's representation in the police forces by improving recruitment, education, and employment as an affirmative action.
- Ensuring active and meaningful participation of CSOs.
- Developing ASEAN Guiding Principles on Human Rights-based Policing.
- Including human rights in the police academy curriculum.

AICHR expressed gratitude to its partners, including the Australian Human Rights Commission, Embassy of Switzerland, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, for their support in making the event a success.

## **AICHR Philippines Hosts Inaugural Workshop on Indigenous Knowledge and Climate Change Best Practices**

MANILA, 10 December 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Philippines, in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia), successfully conducted the inaugural *AICHR Workshop on Best Practices in Promoting Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge in Responding and Adapting to the Impact of Climate Change* on 9-10 December 2024 in Manila, Philippines.

The workshop was attended by over 40 participants, both onsite and online, including Representatives from AICHR, the Australian

government and the AHRC, Pacific Island nations, the ASEAN Secretariat, government agencies, international organisations and subsidiary bodies of the United Nations, and civil society organisations.

During the two-day event participants tackled the effects of the global climate emergency on indigenous groups and traditional communities, emphasising how their unique perspectives can contribute to facing this challenge head-on. The role of UNESCO in addressing such obstacles through ongoing initiatives were discussed by various representatives across government



agencies and civil society organisations, in addition to sharing experiences and best practices in the ASEAN region, and beyond, particularly in other climate-vulnerable areas such as the Pacific Island states.

Ongoing regional initiatives on climate change mitigation and adaptation in view of enhancing and supporting the adaptive capacity of indigenous groups and local communities were shared by participants, including the initiatives for the ongoing draft ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, and Sustainable Environment.

Various academics and experts presented approaches for promoting indigenous and traditional knowledge as well as empower their involvement in crafting global policies and mechanisms. Acknowledging the significance of this timely initiative by AICHR Philippines, participants expressed great interest in succeeding iterations of the event to further strengthen the collaboration between AICHR, indigenous communities, and relevant stakeholders.

### **Press Release – AICHR Workshop on Best Practice Approaches for Implementing Accepted UPR Recommendations**

LUANG PRABANG, 12 December 2024 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened the AICHR Workshop on Best Practice Approaches for Implementing Accepted UPR Recommendations on 11-12 December 2024 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR.

The event brought together over 60 participants, including representatives of AICHR; ASEAN Member States, including

relevant line-ministries of the Lao PDR, Ministry of Justice of Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (International Organisations Department) of Viet Nam and Malaysia; ASEAN Secretariat; Timor-Leste; civil society organisations; Regional Representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in South-East Asia (OHCHR); Australian Embassy to the Lao PDR, Australian Human Rights Commission, and Australian Attorney General's Department.

This workshop is part of AICHR’s Five-Year Work Plan 2021-2025 to strengthen the implementation of international human rights treaty obligations by ASEAN Member States. It provided a platform for government officials, civil society organisations, and external partners to exchange experiences, lessons learned, and best practices on implementing accepted Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations. The workshop sought to enhance understanding of the UPR process and its value in promoting and protecting human rights; exchange best practices and experiences for implementing UPR recommendations; and strengthen collaboration among ASEAN Member States and external partners.

During the opening session, Ambassador Yong Changthalangsy, Lao PDR’s Representative to AICHR, AICHR Chair emphasised that this workshop marks the initiation to a series of capacity-building activities aiming at enhancing national mechanisms of reporting which requires knowledge and understanding of international obligations under international human rights treaties and commitments through the UPR.

He also iterated that this workshop serves as a platform for ASEAN Member States to share best practices, lessons learned, and experiences in tracking and implementing accepted UPR recommendations. He highlighted Lao PDR’s 3<sup>rd</sup> UPR cycle experiences, where 160 out of 226 recommendations were accepted. He also underscored the importance of collaboration among stakeholders to implement the Plan of Action (POA) and prepare for the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> UPR cycle.

Echoing this sentiment, Ms. Elizabeth Adler, representative of the Australian Embassy to the Lao PDR highlighted the unique value of the UPR lying in the fact that this mechanism is an inclusive and periodic review for all 193 UN member states that builds a good constructive dialogue for all kinds of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

The workshop was organised by AICHR Lao PDR with funding support from the Australian Embassy to the Lao PDR and Australian Human Rights Commission.



## **Workshop on Transition between AICHR Representatives 2022-2024 and AICHR Representatives 2025-2027**

On 10 February 2025, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission of Human Rights (AICHR) hosted a Transition Workshop themed “Building better and stronger, and staying relevant, inclusive, innovative and people-centred” to facilitate the transition of several outgoing AICHR Representatives (2022-2024) and incoming AICHR Representatives.

The workshop provided a platform to stock-take on AICHR’s progress and challenges while ensuring continuity in AICHR’s operations. It facilitated the sharing of knowledge and alignment of work particularly on the new Five-Year Work Plan (FYWP) to be developed in 2025, AICHR’s Terms of Reference and the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment.

Former Representatives spoke about their experience with AICHR in the past and incoming Representatives provided valuable insights into key human rights trends and emerging issues and challenges for AICHR. The workshop also heard about the evolving regional human rights landscape and its implications for AICHR, as

well as opportunities to advance human rights diplomacy in the region.

Ending the programme, an active and constructive dialogue with discussants from the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism (Entity Associated with ASEAN under Annex 2, ASEAN Charter), and Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) (both being Civil Society Organisations with consultative relationship with AICHR) provided an opportunity for civil society to share their views and expectations for the future of AICHR.

Key points that emerged from the workshop included the need to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration on human rights, and for AICHR’s work to be impactful through its adaptability, flexibility, and being balanced on the promotion and protection aspects of human rights.

Following this workshop, the 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the AICHR will be held from 11 to 14 February 2025 in Langkawi, Kedah, chaired by His Excellency Edmund Bon Tai Soon.

## **Press Release — 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting and Retreat of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights**

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened its 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting from 11 to 14 February 2025 in Langkawi, Malaysia. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, Chair of AICHR in 2025 and Representative of Malaysia to AICHR, and attended by AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives, including Timor-Leste as Observer. The Meeting was also participated by the ASEAN Secretariat.

Malaysia assumed the AICHR Chairmanship for 2025, with H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon highlighting the ASEAN theme “Inclusivity and Sustainability” in the first 2025 meeting of AICHR. He emphasised the need for an ASEAN-led, ASEAN-owned, and whole-of-ASEAN approach to advance peace, inclusive growth, and sustainable development.

AICHR deliberated on the progress implementation of the FYWP 2021-2025 and



## 40<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ASEAN INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (AICHR) 11-14 FEBRUARY 2025, LANGKAWI



its 2025 Priority Programmes / Activities, with a particular focus on thematic areas such as environmental rights, business and human rights, digital rights, countering human trafficking and violent extremism, rights of persons with disabilities, right to development, and implementation of human rights treaties that the ASEAN Member States are parties to, among others.

AICHR also deliberated on the proposed ASEAN declaration related to the right to a safe, clean and sustainable environment towards progressing it as tasked by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) in its 57<sup>th</sup> Meeting's Joint Communique 2024. In addition, Malaysia introduced a proposal for an ASEAN declaration promoting peace, inclusive growth, sustainable development and the right to development, aligning with the theme of Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship 2025.

The Meeting received updates from AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives on recent human rights developments across ASEAN, including new national laws, regulations and initiatives in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

AICHR also adopted the Thematic Study on the Right to Peace, led by Lao PDR, and agreed for the report to be made available on the AICHR website and other reports that are outcomes of AICHR programmes. The study can inspire the work for peace with a higher mission to advance a culture of peace and human rights.

On institutional matters, AICHR discussed the overall assessment of its work over the past 15 years and AICHR's past self-assessments. These discussions aimed to formulate recommendations to the AMM on AICHR's future priorities for the next five years.

A Retreat among AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives deliberated various AICHR priority areas during Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship 2025, including the proposed ASEAN declaration related to the right to a safe, clean and sustainable environment.

In parallel, the Working Group for the AICHR Five-Year Work Plan (WG-FYWP) convened its first meeting on 11 February 2025, agreeing on a revised timeline for the meetings of WG-FYWP and to preliminarily populate the indicative activities for the new FYWP. Updates

were presented to AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives.

Preceding the 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting of AICHR, AICHR held the Transition Workshop on 10 February 2025, themed “Building better and stronger, and staying relevant, inclusive, innovative and people-centred”, to facilitate the

transition of outgoing AICHR Representatives (2022-2024) and incoming AICHR Representatives (2025-2027).

The Meeting expressed its appreciation to AICHR Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the excellent meeting arrangements.

## **AICHR Convenes Workshop to Enhance Regional Human Rights Treaty Compliance**



VIENTIANE, 7 March 2025 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened the AICHR Workshop to share best practices on the implementation of Treaties to which all ASEAN Member States (AMS) are Parties on 6-7 March in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

The workshop brought together over participants, with representatives from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare across AMS, Timor-Leste, ASEAN Secretariat, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Office for South-East Asia, Australian Embassy to the Lao PDR,

National Human Rights committees, Australian Human Rights Commission, Australian National Children’s Commission, People with Disabilities Australia, Lao Human Rights Focal Points and civil society organisations.

This workshop is one of the activities under the AICHR’s Five-Year Work Plan 2021-2025 aimed at strengthening the implementation of international human rights treaty obligations by AMS. It provided a platform for government officials, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and external partners to exchange experiences, lessons learned, and best practices on implementing human rights treaties to which all AMS are parties.

The workshop sought to 1) to identify practical, internal legal procedures among AMS on how the legal drafting process may be undertaken to ensure the implementation of human rights treaty obligation at the national level, where applicable; 2) to share best practices on drafting and presenting the national report before the treaty bodies; 3) to exchange lessons learnt on considering the Concluding Observations of treaty bodies; 4) to share best practices among AMS regarding their translation of human rights treaty obligations to domestic legislation; and 5) to encourage ASEAN's relevant sectoral bodies, especially ASEAN Law Ministers' Meeting (ALAWMM) / ASEAN Senior Law Officials Meeting (ASLOM), to undertake cross sectoral cooperation that contributes to the implementation and realisation of human rights for the peoples of ASEAN in line with the ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD).

During the two-day workshop, participants shared experiences and best practices related to the implementation of treaties to which AMS are parties, particularly treaty ratification, translating treaties into domestic legislation, sharing experiences of reporting to UN Committee under treaty bodies, translating Concluding Observation into Plan of Action, implementation treaty obligations, including national systems to track and follow up progress as well as NHRIs and CSOs' contributions to monitoring the implementation of treaties.

Yong Chanthalangsy, Representative of the Lao PDR to the AICHR, Chair of the workshop, expressed gratitude to all participants for their active contributions as well as the partners, including the Australian Embassy to the Lao PDR and the Australian Human Rights Commission for their support in making the event a success.

### **AICHR Press Release on the Deadly Earthquakes in Myanmar and Thailand on 28 March 2025**

2 April 2025

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) expresses its profound sorrow over the devastating earthquakes and aftershocks that struck Myanmar on 28 March 2025 which also affected neighbouring countries including Thailand. This disaster has claimed thousands of lives with scores missing and injured. Catastrophic damage has been inflicted on homes, infrastructures, places of worship, and buildings of cultural heritage and significance.

AICHR extends its deepest condolences to the families of victims and stands in solidarity with the peoples of Myanmar and Thailand during this difficult time. We acknowledge the swift response of the relevant parties and global community in mobilising rescue and relief efforts. It is important that humanitarian assistance reaches all affected communities and areas equitably and indiscriminately without delay, with special attention to vulnerable and marginalised populations.

AICHR emphasises the importance of upholding human rights during emergency responses, and for aid to be distributed equitably. Measures taken to provide essential medical care and health-care services, and access to medical facilities should prioritise vulnerable and marginalised groups including women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. We also urge the immediate facilitation of humanitarian access to all affected communities and areas without disruption and discrimination, in line with international humanitarian response principles.

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Outcome of the Special Emergency Meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers in the Aftermath of the Earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand of 30 March 2025 reaffirmed the importance of a safe and conducive environment in Myanmar to ensure the delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance, encouraged all Myanmar stakeholders to focus on humanitarian assistance to facilitate relief efforts, and welcomed Myanmar's readiness to ensure humanitarian aid reaches those in need, in a timely and effective manner without disruption and discrimination.

AICHR shares its deep sympathy and concern for the people of Myanmar during this tragic time that has compounded existing challenges. Given the circumstances, safe, swift and uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid and relief services to all affected communities and areas is important.

AICHR welcomes the measures already taken by numerous parties, including ASEAN Member States, ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), United Nations (UN) and dialogue partners, to assist Myanmar. In the spirit of our shared ASEAN commitment to human rights, AICHR supports enhanced efforts to provide effective and timely aid and relief to Myanmar. AICHR stands ready to work and collaborate with ASEAN sectoral bodies and entities, and the international community pursuant to its mandate to provide any needed guidance, assistance and services to Myanmar and Thailand.

Together, let us support the resilience and recovery of the affected communities.

## Press Release — Special Meeting 1/2025 of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights



The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened its Special Meeting 1/2025 from 8 to 10 April 2025 in Penang, Malaysia. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, Representative of Malaysia to AICHR, and attended by AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives, including Timor-Leste as Observer, and officials of the ASEAN Secretariat.

At this meeting, AICHR hosted an inaugural Interface Consultation with the ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN) and had a frank and constructive exchange of views on the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment. Following that, AICHR agreed on the text of the proposed declaration.

AICHR continued its deliberation on the development of the AICHR Five-Year Work Plan (FYWP) 2026-2030. As part of this process, findings from the final review of the AICHR

FYWP 2021-2025 were presented. Discussions also covered preparations for the 2026 Priority Programmes / Activities of AICHR and its 2025 Annual Report, both to be submitted to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) in July 2025.

AICHR further deliberated and agreed on the text of the proposed ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development.

AICHR discussed progress of the implementation of its priority programmes and activities, covering a range of thematic areas such as the rights of children and persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, youth engagement, mental health in the digital age, business and human rights, environmental sustainability, the right to development, the right to peace, trafficking in persons and people smuggling, among others.

AICHR also deliberated on operational and institutional matters, including communications received by AICHR. Measures to strengthen collaboration with ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and Entities across the three ASEAN Community pillars were discussed, including the identification of human rights thematic areas for follow-up work. Further, AICHR considered plans to undertake a self-assessment of its work and progress since its establishment in 2009.

AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives exchanged views on recent developments including the issues of online scamming, trafficking in persons, transnational crime, death penalty, gender equality, engagement with the United Nations and the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, and the devastating earthquake that struck Myanmar and Thailand on 28 March 2025. Representatives welcomed the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Impact of the Earthquake in Myanmar on 28 March 2025 and the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Outcome of the Special Emergency Meeting in the Aftermath of the Earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand on 30 March 2025 respectively. AICHR also expressed its deepest

sympathies and stands in solidarity with the peoples of Myanmar and Thailand affected by the earthquake.

AICHR joined its voice to the statements of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, calling for rapid, safe and unimpeded access of life-saving humanitarian assistance and relief efforts in Myanmar. They encouraged all stakeholders in Myanmar to focus on humanitarian assistance and facilitate relief efforts, and to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those in need, in a timely and effective manner without disruption and discrimination. AICHR underscored the importance of upholding human rights during emergency responses, and for a safe and enabling environment for humanitarian aid to be distributed equitably, with special attention to vulnerable and marginalised groups.

On 10 April 2025, AICHR met with and had a frank and interactive exchange of views with Pusat KOMAS, a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) with consultative status with AICHR.

AICHR expressed its appreciation to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the excellent meeting arrangements.



## Joint Press Release — AICHR-ASOEN Interface Consultation on the Proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment



On 8 April 2025, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN) had their inaugural Interface Consultation in Penang, Malaysia.

A welcome dinner was hosted by Malaysia and AICHR Chair, H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, on 7 April, followed by a joint site visit to the Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies (CEMACS), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and an informal working lunch both on 8 April. The consultation brought together AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives, including Timor-Leste as Observer, and ASOEN National Focal Points (NFPs) marking a significant milestone in the development of the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment which has been on-going for over two years.

The Interface Consultation deliberated on the text of the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment. Substantive discussions centred on the content and strategic direction of the proposed declaration with the aim of strengthening inter-sectoral and inter-pillar coordination and enhancing policy coherence to ensure the proposed declaration's alignment with ASEAN's existing frameworks and commitments, including the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 2012.

The Interface Consultation reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to enhancing and advancing policies that will promote environment and climate resilience and awareness, inclusivity and sustainability, and the protection of human rights for present and future generations.

The Interface Consultation emphasised strengthening coordination between AICHR and the environment sector, and for the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment and any follow-up actions to be coherent and inclusive, grounded in ASEAN principles and shared commitments to environmental protection and human rights.

The site visit saw dynamic and constructive exchanges, building bridges between the human rights and environmental sectors within ASEAN while sharing knowledge and good practices.

Through this engagement, delegates deepened their mutual understanding on the use of science in supporting the resilience of communities, and concerns on prioritising the protection of national heritage, marine life and natural ecosystems.

AICHR and ASOEN looked forward to continued constructive discussions, deliberations and coordination, and expressed their appreciation to the Government of Malaysia for its generous support and hospitality in hosting this important Interface Consultation and joint site visit.

### **Joint Press Release — Lunch Meeting of AICHR with Pusat KOMAS (as Convening Secretariat of ASEANPeoples@ASEAN2025 & Civil Society Organisation in Consultative Relationship with AICHR)**

On 10 April 2025, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) hosted a lunch meeting with Pusat KOMAS, a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) with consultative relationship with AICHR and currently serving as the convening secretariat for the ASEANPeoples@ASEAN2025 events. The meeting was attended by AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives, including Timor-Leste as Observer, the delegation from the ASEANPeoples@ASEAN2025, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat.

The meeting had a frank and interactive exchange of information on AICHR's priority programmes and thematic areas, and activities of the ASEANPeoples@ASEAN2025 and further discussed recent developments on human rights in ASEAN to promote and

protect human rights in the region. The meeting extended their condolences to the affected survivors and victims of the devastating earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand and extended their appreciation to ASEAN and relevant bodies in recovery and relief efforts.

The meeting noted the information shared by the ASEANPeoples@ASEAN2025 regarding its upcoming programme, scheduled for 24 to 25 May 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and welcomed the continued constructive engagement.

AICHR and Pusat KOMAS expressed their appreciation to the Government of Malaysia for its generous support and hospitality in hosting the lunch meeting.

## **ASEAN Meets to Deepen its Common Approach and Position to Implement the Human Right to Development and Consult on the Proposed ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development**

*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 28 April 2025:* Today, ASEAN stands proudly as the world's fifth-largest market with the third-largest labour force. By 2030, ASEAN is projected to become the fourth-largest economy globally. Yet, ASEAN faces a complex and evolving security landscape — geopolitical and geo-economic tensions, internal conflicts, transnational organised crime, climate change, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, and natural disasters. These pose persistent challenges and threats to the people's human right to development and peace, and a strong, balanced human rights-based approach to address them is crucial.

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) thus convened the 2<sup>nd</sup> AICHR Consultation on the Human Right to Development to Enhance the ASEAN Community: Realising Article 35 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 2012.

The consultation follows the first consultation held from 11 to 12 November 2019 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The Jakarta consultation introduced aspects of the right, debated the origins and took stock of ASEAN's progress in realising the right. There were several different approaches to the right to development presented then: one, the human rights approach; two, the development approach; three, the people approach; and four, the State approach. Key recommendations from that consultation included monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the right to development, addressing emerging threats such as inequality and cross-border issues, gathering data across ASEAN to shape policies, providing a platform for grievances, and working with the private sector and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ABAC) to mainstream human rights in business.





This time, the Kuala Lumpur consultation deepened ASEAN deliberations towards adopting a common approach and position to protect the right to development and linking it with the right to peace. ASEAN Member States recognise both rights under Articles 35, 36, 37 and 38\* of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 2012 (AHRD). In particular, the consultation focused on ways for ASEAN to provide a regional platform to operationalise the implementation of the right to development as a priority.

Led by Edmund Bon Tai Soon, the current AICHR Chair and Representative of Malaysia to the AICHR, the consultation highlighted the importance of the right to development in all its facets and how the right relates to inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and ASEAN peace. These matters were emphasised as core matters in AICHR’s human rights agenda.

“Development has always been a central theme in ASEAN. Its importance becomes even more profound when linked to the pursuit of peace. The peace we seek to achieve is not merely negative peace — the absence of conflict — but also positive peace, which means building

the conditions for justice, equality, and lasting harmony. Positive peace requires addressing the root causes of conflict, ensuring inclusive and sustainable development, protecting human rights, and fostering societies where every individual can thrive with dignity and security,” Bon said in his opening speech.

After tracing the drafting history of the right to development and how it emerged, Bon acknowledged past criticisms of the AHRD but stressed that the inclusion of the right to development — alongside the right to peace and the right to a safe, clean and sustainable environment — was accepted by ASEAN Member States during the AHRD drafting. He referred to these as “add-value” rights that reflect ASEAN’s regional context and priorities, distinguishing the AHRD from global human rights instruments.

While there were divergent views within the region on the right to development during the negotiations of the AHRD — some focusing on state sovereignty and non-interference, and others promoting a rights-based, participatory approach, Bon noted that it is clear from Article 35 that the lack of development cannot justify human rights violations.

Bon also stated that the AICHR is pursuing the adoption of a proposed “ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development” this year. Led by Malaysia, the proposed declaration aims to embed ASEAN’s common approach and position on the rights to development and peace, and their implementation. It will further reinforce ASEAN’s long-standing vision of inclusive growth and sustainable development.

“Yet, being an economic powerhouse is not an end by itself. The true measure of ASEAN’s success lies in how it uplifts lives — by securing basic human rights and necessities, creating equal opportunities, and ensuring that development is inclusive and sustainable in both process and outcome. ...

While efforts to promote peacebuilding, preventive diplomacy, and community resilience are on-going, economic disparities and differing political systems within ASEAN continue to pose significant hurdles.

As a result, segments of our society remain vulnerable and marginalised. Their voices are often excluded from decision-making processes on issues that directly impact their lives. Consequently, they are unable to fully participate in, or benefit from, the development and peace processes in our region.

Development must be people-centred. To truly realise the right to development, we must embrace a comprehensive approach — one that continually advances well-being and ensures free, meaningful, and inclusive participation,” Bon added.

In his keynote address, Professor Dr. Surya Deva, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development congratulated the AICHR for its leadership in developing the rights to development and peace in ASEAN and for AICHR’s continuous efforts to engage

with a diverse range of stakeholders including civil society organisations (CSOs). He said that a holistic understanding of the right to development provides a transformative pathway to overcome multiple challenges that the world is facing.

Through the right to development, ASEAN can take the lead in these times of emerging “world disorder” and promote free, active and meaningful participation of the people of ASEAN in decision-making processes. He offered an illustrative list of five serious challenges: worsening inequalities, breached planetary boundaries, the highest number of conflicts, top-down decision-making and collapse of multilateralism.

Further, Professor Deva outlined the conceptual framework of the right to development based on international human rights law and standards as follows (1-2-3-4-5):

(1) It is a human right;

with

(2) two *dimensions*: individual and collective;

(3) three *elements*: the ability of individuals to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy the right (and benefit equitably and sustainably);

(4) four *facets*: economic, social, cultural and political development; and,

(5) five *principles*: self-determination, inter-sectional, intergenerational equity, fair distribution and international cooperation.

More than 60 delegates participated in the consultation. They included AICHR Representatives, Alternate Representatives and Assistants, and representatives from ASEAN sectoral bodies, entities and centres, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), CSOs, and experts from ASEAN Member States.

Delegates provided their aspirations, feedback and inputs to the proposed ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development and its implementation to enhance the value of the document.

Additionally, delegates presented views on addressing inequalities and responsible business conduct while treating the right to development as a cross-cutting right with important thematic areas such as migration, trade and investment, climate change, environmental pollution, business and human rights, new technologies, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The AICHR will gather the outcomes and recommendations of this consultation for deliberations in its continued efforts to advance the rights to development and peace in ASEAN.

As the ASEAN Chair in 2025, Malaysia hosted the consultation as part of its inclusivity and sustainability initiatives. Australia, through the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and Australian AID (AusAID), jointly funded the programme together with ASEAN through its AICHR Fund.

The consultation was conducted in the usual ASEAN spirit of mutual respect and courtesy.

*\* Note: Articles 35, 36, 37 and 38 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 2012 state as follows:*

#### *RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT*

35. *The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and the peoples of ASEAN are entitled to participate in, contribute to, enjoy and benefit equitably and*

*sustainably from economic, social, cultural and political development. The right to development should be fulfilled so as to meet equitably the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. While development facilitates and is necessary for the enjoyment of all human rights, the lack of development may not be invoked to justify the violations of internationally recognised human rights.*

36. *ASEAN Member States should adopt meaningful people-oriented and gender responsive development programmes aimed at poverty alleviation, the creation of conditions including the protection and sustainability of the environment for the peoples of ASEAN to enjoy all human rights recognised in this Declaration on an equitable basis, and the progressive narrowing of the development gap within ASEAN.*

37. *ASEAN Member States recognise that the implementation of the right to development requires effective development policies at the national level as well as equitable economic relations, international cooperation and a favourable international economic environment. ASEAN Member States should mainstream the multidimensional aspects of the right to development into the relevant areas of ASEAN community building and beyond, and shall work with the international community to promote equitable and sustainable development, fair trade practices and effective international cooperation.*

#### *RIGHT TO PEACE*

38. *Every person and the peoples of ASEAN have the right to enjoy peace within an ASEAN framework of security and stability, neutrality and freedom, such that the rights set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised. To this end, ASEAN Member States should continue to enhance friendship and cooperation in the furtherance of peace, harmony and stability in the region.*

## **AICHR and Key Stakeholders Consult on Key ASEAN Human Rights Issues in the Process of Developing AICHR’s Human Rights Work Plan for 2026 to 2030**

*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 29 April 2025:* The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened the inaugural Regional Consultation to Support the Development of the AICHR Five-Year Work Plan (2026-2030) (FYWP) in line with the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and Strategic Plans of Action.

The FYWP serves as the strategic document guiding AICHR’s programming and direction. Since its establishment in 2009, the AICHR has adopted three Five-Year Work Plans to implement its mandate and functions. The current FYWP (2021-2025) concludes in 2025 and AICHR, under Malaysia’s leadership, is currently formulating the new FYWP for 2026 to 2030.

Given that AICHR has conducted 155 activities covering 40 thematic human rights areas, the consultation sought to identify key issues, challenges and opportunities to advance human rights protection and promotion in ASEAN and to enhance AICHR’s role as the overarching human rights body in ASEAN.

Led by Edmund Bon Tai Soon, the current AICHR Chair and Representative of Malaysia to the AICHR, the consultation marked the first time that the AICHR has held an open consultation on its work plan to consult, discuss and receive feedback and inputs from stakeholders, including ASEAN sectoral bodies, entities and centres, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and experts from ASEAN Member States.

In his opening remarks, Bon said:

“The upcoming Work Plan commences in 2026. After two phases of norm setting

and socialisation — and 16 years since our establishment — we are looking at a new phase of AICHR’s programming to protect and promote human rights in the region. ...

Today marks the first time AICHR is hosting a regional consultation to develop its proposed work plan. We believe it is crucial to create an open and safe space for dialogue on how AICHR can strengthen its human rights efforts and position itself among the leading commissions globally, while remaining relevant to current challenges. Our aim is to finalise the work plan by June, but as of now, nothing is set in stone. We are here to listen and learn from you. As always, we welcome all perspectives and look forward to receiving your recommendations on how we can improve the previous work plan. ...

Importantly, we cannot forget that our work must impact the people. How do we adopt a more programmatic approach? How do we deepen the understanding or reporting or monitoring of the 40 thematic areas to ensure coherence in the region? How do we respond to emerging threats and challenges to human rights?”

Delegates, resource persons and speakers at the consultation discussed numerous important issues including broadening AICHR’s thematic areas to include both emerging traditional and non-traditional security challenges such as the use of artificial intelligence (AI); governance and accountability matters; transnational organised crimes; online scamming; forced labour; impact on human rights as a result of trade wars and the imposition of governmental tariffs; the rights of older persons and the care sector; human rights in post-conflict and reconciliation settings; and advanced protection for persons with disabilities.

The consultation also heard presentations of findings from three reviews and evaluations of the current FYWP — one by the ASEAN Secretariat and two by independent experts from Malaysia and Thailand. Key follow-up actions and recommendations included maintaining critical focus areas for long-term impact, improving tracking, categorising thematic monitoring and evaluation areas, updating outdated human rights work areas, institutionalising outcome-oriented frameworks, and establishing regular consultation and structured feedback mechanisms with stakeholders.

The AICHR was also encouraged to cooperate with Parliamentarians, national and local authorities, NHRIs and the private sector on relevant human rights matters.

Building on the aspiration for AICHR's work to be impactful through its adaptability, flexibility, and balance on the promotion and protection aspects of human rights, the recommendations and inputs were well-received and will be considered by the AICHR when formulating the new FYWP.

More than 60 delegates participated in the consultation. They included AICHR Representatives, Alternate Representatives and Assistants, and representatives from ASEAN sectoral bodies, NHRIs and CSOs.

Malaysia led the consultation as part of its 2025 inclusivity and sustainability initiatives chairing ASEAN together with co-proponents, Thailand, Lao PDR, Indonesia, and Singapore. ASEAN, through its AICHR Fund, co-funded the programme with Australia through the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and Australian AID (AusAID).

This landmark consultation underscored AICHR's commitment to shaping a people-centred, people-oriented and forward-looking human rights agenda that continues to implement the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 2012 in line with international human rights standards and the upcoming ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and Strategic Plans of Action.

The consultation was conducted in the usual ASEAN spirit of mutual respect and courtesy.



## Press Release — 41<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights



The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened its 41<sup>st</sup> Meeting from 12 to 16 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat, in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Meeting was chaired by Edmund Bon Tai Soon, Representative of Malaysia to AICHR, and attended by Representatives and Alternate Representatives of AICHR and officials of the ASEAN Secretariat. Timor-Leste attended as Observer.

The Meeting deliberated on progress of the implementation of AICHR's priority programmes and activities, covering a wide range of thematic areas, such as mental health in the digital age, rights of children and persons with disabilities, business and human rights, human rights and the environment, human rights and policing, intersection between conflict and human rights, human rights at sea, anti-trafficking initiatives, and ASEAN Youth Debate, among others.

The Meeting agreed on the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment for submission to the ASEAN Foreign

Ministers' Meeting (AMM). The proposed ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development was further discussed, incorporating inputs following AICHR's consultation with relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies.

The Meeting discussed preparations for the Interface of AICHR Representatives with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers at the 58<sup>th</sup> AMM, including the draft AICHR FYWP 2026-2030, the draft 2026 Priority Programmes / Activities of AICHR, Statement of the AICHR Chair to the 58<sup>th</sup> AMM, and the Annual Report of AICHR 2025.

AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand exchanged views on recent human rights developments, including human rights issues, such as transboundary impact of human rights, and new and updated national laws, regulations and initiatives.



AICHR held its 16<sup>th</sup> annual interface meeting with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) and had an engaging and constructive discussion focusing, among others, on strengthening cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN and enhancing inter-sectoral collaboration.

In strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder engagement, AICHR also held its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting with the ASEAN University Network on Human Rights Education (AUN-HRE) to discuss potential joint initiatives on human rights education. The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of AICHR with the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism (WGAHRM), an Entity Associated with ASEAN, focused on measures to strengthen the balanced discharge of AICHR's mandates and institutional capacity. Notably, AICHR held its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting with the Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia), with the participation of representatives of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), and 24 children and youths. The meeting focused on issues related to children's rights and included the sharing

of recommendations by children and youths to address climate change, migration, violence against children, and online harm.

AICHR held its 8<sup>th</sup> meetings with Australia and the European Union, its 4<sup>th</sup> meetings with Japan and Switzerland, and its first meetings with Norway and the Republic of Korea. The meetings discussed potential areas of collaboration, including knowledge-sharing and capacity-building, and recent human rights developments and emerging threats to human rights. Parties reaffirmed the shared commitment to deepening cooperation and looked forward to a sustained and constructive dialogue on human rights.

This 41<sup>st</sup> Meeting progressed and enhanced AICHR's work by, among others, refining thematic focus areas, strengthening partnership and cross-pillar coordination, and engaging in strategic planning towards advancing human rights cooperation in the region.

AICHR expressed its appreciation to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the excellent meeting arrangements.

## Joint Press Release – The 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Australia, 12 May 2025, ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat

The 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Australia was held on 12 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat.

The AICHR was led by its Chair, Edmund Bon Tai Soon, and the Australian delegation was headed by its Ambassador to ASEAN, Tiffany McDonald. The meeting was attended by AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives, and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Chief Executive Leanne Smith, AHRC's Team Lead for International Engagement, Joanna Mansfield, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat.

AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives and Australia's representatives shared information on their respective human rights work and initiatives.

AICHR also highlighted its thematic priorities including programmes on business and human

rights, trafficking in persons, forced labour, rights of persons with disabilities, youth engagement, digital and information rights, right to health, right to development, environment and climate change, gender equality, human rights protection, conflict prevention and human rights at sea, among others.

The Meeting also discussed potential areas of collaboration including knowledge-sharing and capacity-building, and recent human rights developments and emerging threats to human rights, such as online scamming, artificial intelligence, and regional conflicts.

Looking ahead, AICHR and Australia reaffirmed their shared commitment to deepening collaboration and looked forward to future interface meetings as part of a sustained and constructive dialogue on human rights.

The Meeting concluded with appreciation extended to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the excellent meeting arrangements.



**Joint Press Release – The 4<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Japan, 13 May 2025, ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat**



The 4<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Japan was held on 13 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

The AICHR was led by the Chair, Edmund Bon Tai Soon, and Japan was led by its Ambassador to ASEAN, Ambassador Kiya Masahiko. The meeting was attended by the Representatives and Alternate Representatives of AICHR, including Timor-Leste as Observer, delegation from the Mission of Japan to ASEAN, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat.

During the meeting, AICHR outlined its key thematic priorities, which include business and human rights, due diligence, supply chain

transparency, digital and information rights, artificial intelligence (AI), misinformation and disinformation, disaster risk reduction and management, environment and climate change, the right to development, women’s empowerment, and social harmony and inclusion.

Japan shared their focus areas and support for AICHR’s activities in the recent years on issues ranging from rights of persons with disabilities, business and human rights, rights of migrant workers and remedies.

The meeting also explored areas of potential collaboration, including capacity building, raising awareness, and policy dialogues on human rights. Topics for discussion included

the promotion of the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities, the rights of older persons, business and human rights, climate change and environmental issues, torture, the right to development, human trafficking, cybersecurity and digital transformation, as well as human rights at sea.

AICHR and Japan reiterated their mutual commitment to enhancing collaboration and

expressed anticipation for forthcoming interface meetings, which will serve as a foundation for ongoing and constructive dialogue on human rights.

The Meeting concluded with appreciation extended to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the excellent meeting arrangements.

### **Joint Press Release – The 1<sup>st</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Norway, 13 May 2025, ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat**

The inaugural Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Norway was held on 13 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

The AICHR was led by its Chair, Edmund Bon Tai Soon, and the Norwegian delegation was headed by its Ambassador to ASEAN, Ambassador Kjell Tormod Pettersen. The meeting was attended by Representatives and Alternate Representatives of the AICHR, including Timor-Leste as Observer, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat.

AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives and Norway's representatives shared information on their respective human rights work and initiatives.

AICHR also highlighted its thematic priorities, including programmes on the right to development, peace and conflict prevention, business and human rights, access to remedy, the environment and climate change, the rights of women and children, the rights of persons with

disabilities, right to information, freedom of religion and belief, and sharing of best practices on the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), among others.

The meeting also discussed potential areas of collaboration including capacity building and knowledge sharing on best practices on promoting and protecting the rights of women, children, migrant workers and persons with disabilities, gender equality, realising a torture-free region, human rights education, right to peace, conflict prevention and resolution, business and human rights, and emerging human rights issues such as environmental sustainability and human rights due diligence.

Looking ahead, AICHR and Norway reaffirmed their shared commitment to deepening collaboration and looked forward to future interface meetings as part of a sustained and constructive dialogue on human rights.

The Meeting concluded with appreciation extended to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the excellent meeting arrangements.

**Joint Press Release – The 2<sup>nd</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN University Network-Human Rights Education (AUN-HRE), 14 May 2025, ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat**



The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Interface Meeting with the ASEAN University Network–Human Rights Education (AUN-HRE) on 14 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

The AICHR was led by its Chair, Edmund Bon Tai Soon, and the AUN-HRE delegation was led by its Convener, Dr. Vachararutai Boontinand. The meeting was attended by AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives, including Timor-Leste as Observer, members of AUN-HRE, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat. AUN is an Annex 1 body listed in the ASEAN Charter.

The meeting had an interactive and engaging exchange of information on AICHR’s priority

programmes, and AUN-HRE’s activities in promoting human rights education in the region. AICHR shared its Annual Report 2023-2024 and that over the past 15 years since it was established, the Commission has conducted more than 150 activities covering 40 thematic human rights areas. Potential collaborations were also discussed including greater engagements with the youth on human rights, advancing a framework integrating human rights and peace in higher-level education institutions and developing a framework on human rights-based universities in ASEAN.

The meeting welcomed the continued and constructive engagement between parties and concluded with appreciation extended to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the meeting arrangements.

**Joint Press Release – The 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism (WGAHRM), 14 May 2025, ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat**

The 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism (WGAHRM), an Entity under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter, was held on 14 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat.

The AICHR was led by its Chair, Edmund Bon Tai Soon, and the WGAHRM was led by Braema Mathiaparanam. The meeting was attended by AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives, including Timor-Leste as Observer, members of WGAHRM, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat.

AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives and WGAHRM members shared information on their respective human rights work and priorities and discussed thematic issues and developments on human rights in the region, including the rights of migrant

workers, women and children, and persons with disabilities, the right to development, business and human rights, transnational organised and financial crimes, digital rights, data privacy, human rights and the environment, right and access to information, climate-related human rights matters, human rights cities, online harm, artificial intelligence, freedom of expression, emerging geopolitical issues impacting human rights, economic inequalities, measures to strengthen the balance discharge of AICHR’s mandates, and the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The meeting looked forward to the continued constructive engagement and reaffirmed the shared commitment by AICHR and WGAHRM to deepen cooperation and collaboration to advance human rights in ASEAN. It concluded with appreciation extended to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the meeting arrangements.



**Joint Press Release – The 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the European Union (EU), 14 May 2025, ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat**



The 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the European Union (EU) was held on 14 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat.

The AICHR was led by the Chair, Edmund Bon Tai Soon, while Ambassador Sujiro Seam, the EU Ambassador to ASEAN headed the EU delegation. The meeting was attended by Representatives and Alternate Representatives of the AICHR, including Timor-Leste as Observer, officials from the EU Mission to ASEAN and the ASEAN Secretariat.

AICHR Representatives / Alternate Representatives shared information on their respective human rights work and initiatives. Thematic areas discussed included the rights to development, peace, and a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, digital rights,

sustainable connectivity, rights of vulnerable groups, and business and human rights.

The EU highlighted joint efforts undertaken by AICHR and the EU and the collaborative work and partnership to deliver on joint priorities identified during the bi-annual ASEAN-EU Policy Dialogue on Human Rights supported through the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI) and the Danish Institute on Human Rights (DIHR). These priority areas included business and human rights, human rights and the environment, digital rights, migration and trafficking, and counterterrorism, among others.

The meeting reaffirmed the shared commitment to deepening collaboration and looked forward to future interface meetings as part of a sustained and constructive dialogue on human rights. The AICHR and the EU

looked forward to the forthcoming 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-EU Policy Dialogue on Human Rights and 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-EU Civil Society Forum, scheduled to be held in Malaysia in 2025.

The meeting concluded with appreciation extended to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the excellent meeting arrangements.

**Joint Press Release – The 2<sup>nd</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Child Rights Coalition Asia (Including Children and Youth and Representatives of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)), 15 May 2025, ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat**



The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) engaged with the Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia), child and youth delegates, and children’s rights representatives of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) on 15 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> Interface Meeting was led by AICHR’s Chair and Representative of Malaysia, Edmund Bon Tai Soon and attended by AICHR Representatives and Alternate Representatives,

including Timor-Leste as Observer, a delegation from CRC Asia led by its Regional Executive Director, Amihan Abueva including 24 child and youth delegates from the region and former, current and alternate ACWC representatives from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat.

The meeting featured an open dialogue and interactive engagement on children’s rights, focusing on issues relating to the development of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children

(ASEAN RPA on EVAC). Children and youths shared their statements, concerns and messages on climate change, migration, poverty, discrimination and violence against children.

The meeting platformed the work of AICHR and ACWC while hearing from the children and youths on how they thought different ASEAN sectors can work together to end violence against children. They emphasised that meaningful child participation is important to stopping and preventing violence, and called for children and youth involvement in designing and implementing programmes, child-friendly feedback mechanisms, safe spaces for dialogue (such as the interface meeting), awareness-raising through social media platforms children use, and opportunities to include children's inputs in local governance.

The issues raised were from country-level consultations held by CRC Asia that identified key and urgent issues of violence affecting children and youth in their communities. These included physical, sexual, and psychological

violence, bullying and discrimination against marginalised children, online safety (particularly Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC)), the interconnectedness of violence against women and children, climate change, and the heightened vulnerability of children in situations of migration.

The meeting further discussed potential collaborations and welcomed continued engagement. AICHR expressed its appreciation to CRC Asia, the children and youths, and ACWC for sharing their views and aspirations at the interface and acknowledged the importance of child and youth participation in AICHR's work.

The meeting extended their appreciation to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for hosting the interface and facilitating its arrangements. The programme highlighted the continued open dialogue and sustained collaboration between AICHR, governments, children and youth, and civil society needed to effectively combat violence against children.



**Joint Press Release – The 1<sup>st</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Republic of Korea, 16 May 2025, ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat**



The inaugural Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) was held on 16 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

The AICHR was led by the Chair, Edmund Bon Tai Soon, while the ROK delegation was led by its Ambassador to ASEAN, Ambassador Lee Jang-keun. The meeting was attended by Representatives and Alternate Representatives of the AICHR, including Timor-Leste as Observer, delegation from the Mission of ROK to ASEAN, and officials from the ASEAN Secretariat.

During the meeting, AICHR and ROK updated on their respective human rights focus areas including initiatives on business

and human rights, access to justice, new and emerging digital technologies, rights to health, persons with disabilities, environment and climate change, and strengthening human rights mechanisms, among others.

The AICHR Chair shared AICHR’s Annual Report 2023-2024 and that over the past 15 years since it was established, the Commission has conducted more than 150 activities covering 40 thematic human rights areas.

Both parties further explored potential future collaborations and possible engagements to advance joint efforts to promote and protect human rights in ASEAN.

The meeting concluded with appreciation extended to Malaysia and the ASEAN Secretariat for the excellent meeting arrangements.

**16<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR), 16 May 2025, ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat**

The 16<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) was held on 16 May 2025 at the ASEAN Headquarters / ASEAN Secretariat. Co-chaired by Edmund Bon Tai Soon, AICHR Chair and Representative of Malaysia to AICHR, and Ambassador Sarah Al Bakri Devadason, CPR Chair, the meeting was attended by Representatives and Alternate Representatives of AICHR and Permanent Representatives to ASEAN, with the participation of Timor-Leste as an Observer, and officials of the ASEAN Secretariat.

AICHR and CPR had an engaging and constructive discussion focusing, among others, on strengthening cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN

and enhancing inter-sectoral collaboration. Deepening AICHR’s engagement with relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies would ensure complementarities in advancing human rights within the ASEAN Community.

Deliberations explored taking a balanced approach in the discharge of AICHR’s mandate and equal consideration of civil and political rights alongside economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. In drafting of AICHR’s Five-Year Work Plan (2026-2030), the meeting encouraged a long-term programmatic perspective that allowed AICHR to be responsive, relevant, agile, innovative, decisive and future-ready in addressing global and regional human rights challenges in accordance with the ASEAN Vision 2045 and ASEAN principles of consensus, unity, and Centrality.



## ASEAN Launches Regional Guideline on Non-Punishment Principle to Strengthen Victim Protection in Trafficking in Persons Cases



JAKARTA, 2 June 2025 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), with the support of the Australian Government funded ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking programme, jointly launched the *ASEAN Guideline on the Implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Persons* on 2 June in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The launch of the Guideline marks a significant milestone in ASEAN's regional efforts to strengthen victim protection in addressing trafficking in persons (TIP), in line with Article 14(7) of the ASEAN Convention Against TIP, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP). The Guideline aims to provide practical direction to ASEAN Member States (AMS) in implementing the non-punishment principle (NPP), ensuring that victims of trafficking are not penalised for unlawful acts they were compelled to commit as a direct consequence of their trafficking experience.

This event was attended by around 130 participants in person and around 130 participants joined online, comprising representatives from ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, ASEAN Dialogue Partners, justice and non-justice agencies, civil society organisations, academia, and international partners. The event featured opening remarks by representatives of AICHR and SOMTC, alongside the Australian Ambassador to ASEAN, and Mugiyanto, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Human Rights of Indonesia, delivered the keynote address.

The launch was followed by a panel discussion featuring ASEAN experts, including the Representative of Indonesia to AICHR for 2019-2024, representative from SOMTC Vietnam, and international partners, including the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) and ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking programme International Law and Policy Adviser. The discussion focused on the importance of integrating the NPP into national legal and policy frameworks and enhancing



cooperation to support its implementation across the region. Participants showed high enthusiasm towards this progressive step and the future implementation of the Guideline.

In her remarks, Anita Wahid, Representative of Indonesia to AICHR, underscored the importance of upholding human rights and ensuring victim-centered approaches in ASEAN's response to TIP. F Lilian De Leon, Assistant Secretary for International Relations of the Department of the Interior and Local Government of the Philippines / SOMTC Philippines, further highlighted the collaborative efforts among AMS in bringing the Guideline to fruition.

On 3 June 2025, a closed consultation meeting was convened with SOMTC and AICHR Representatives, including Timor-Leste, to

deliberate on practical steps for promoting and implementing the Guideline at the regional and national levels. Partners from the ASEAN Australia Counter Trafficking programme, as well as the UNOHCHR, also participated.

The ASEAN Non-Punishment Guideline is available in English and will be translated into the national languages of AMS. A digital version is accessible on the ASEAN website (ASEAN Guideline on the Implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle for Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Persons — ASEAN Main Portal).

This initiative reflects ASEAN's strong cross-sectoral commitment to advancing a comprehensive, human rights-based, and victim-centered approach in the fight against TIP.

## **AICHR Roundtable Fosters Inter-Religious Harmony in ASEAN**

SINGAPORE, 27 June 2025 — The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), in collaboration with the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, convened a roundtable on inter-religious harmony and the

promotion of resilient and cohesive societies in Southeast Asia, in Singapore.

As one of the most culturally and religiously diverse regions in the world, the freedom of

thought, conscience and religion is enshrined as a fundamental human right in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. ASEAN Member States have sought to promote inter-religious harmony within ASEAN, as well as collectively develop practical and innovative solutions to strengthen societal resilience and cohesion against religious extremism and intolerance.

The Roundtable brought together over 30 participants from AICHR, the ASEAN Secretariat, and researchers from the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute and other think tanks in Singapore. Participants exchanged perspectives and different approaches to promoting religious harmony in Southeast Asia. They also discussed ways to manage differences between the diverse religious groups in the region, and AICHR's role in promoting dialogue, capacity building, and sharing best practices towards building resilient and cohesive societies in ASEAN.

Researchers from the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute shared findings from their annual *State of Southeast Asia Survey*, as well as their research on social cohesion, religion, and diversity in Southeast Asia. The Roundtable highlighted the importance of open dialogue and outreach,

as well as trust and confidence building across various stakeholders to enhance the value of multiculturalism and cooperation among different communities.

The participants also visited the Harmony Centre at the An-Nahdha Mosque and the Maghain Aboth Synagogue. At the Harmony Centre, AICHR was briefed on the Centre's work in promoting interfaith dialogue and the Muslim community's contributions to social cohesion in Singapore. At the Maghain Aboth Synagogue, AICHR engaged in a panel discussion with representatives from the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Jewish communities in Singapore who shared their best practices in promoting interfaith understanding` and cooperation. The participants were also hosted to a tour of the Synagogue and the Jews of Singapore Museum.

The Roundtable and site visits were organised and hosted by AICHR Singapore, in collaboration with the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Harmony Centre, and Maghain Aboth Synagogue. Earlier, AICHR delegates had attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Cohesive Societies held in Singapore from 24-26 June.



# Representatives of AICHR (July 2024–June 2025)



Brunei Darussalam:  
H.E. Hajah Nor Hashimah  
Haji Mohammed Taib  
(January 2020–  
December 2024)



Brunei Darussalam:  
H.E. Ajman bin  
Haji Meludin  
(January 2025–present)



Cambodia:  
H.E. Keo Remy  
(January 2022–present)



Indonesia:  
H.E. Yuyun Wahyuningrum  
(January 2019–  
December 2024)



Indonesia:  
H.E. Anita Ashvini Wahid  
(January 2025–present)



Lao PDR:  
H.E. Ambassador Yong  
Chanthalangsy  
(January 2022–present)



Malaysia:  
H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon  
(May 2024–present)



Myanmar:  
H.E. U Nyunt Swe  
(July 2024–present)



Philippines:  
H.E. Angelito A. Nayan  
(May–December 2024)



Philippines:  
H.E. Severo S. Catura  
(April 2025–present)



Singapore:  
H.E. Shashi Jayakumar  
(January 2019–  
December 2024)



Singapore:  
H.E. Eugene Tan  
Kheng Boon  
(January 2025–present)



Thailand:  
H.E. Amara Pongsapich  
(January 2019–  
December 2024)



Thailand:  
H.E. Bhanubhatra Jittieng  
(January 2025–present)



Viet Nam:  
H.E. Ambassador Nguyen  
Thai Yen Huong  
(January 2019–  
December 2024)



Viet Nam:  
H.E. Ambassador Nguyen  
Trung Thanh  
(January 2025–present)

# Photo Gallery

July to December 2024



A. Annual Interface with the Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn (24 July 2024; Vientiane, Lao PDR)  
B. ASEAN Forum on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly to Promote the Implementation of Article 24 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (15–16 July 2024; Banten, Indonesia)  
C. 6th ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue (5 November 2024; Jakarta, Indonesia)

July to December 2024 (continued)



D. Special Meeting 2/2024 (13–15 November 2024; Luang Prabang, Lao PDR)

E. First ASEAN Dialogue on Human Rights and Policing (2–3 December 2024; Bali, Indonesia)

## January to June 2025



F. AICHR and ASOEN joint site visit to the Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies (CEMACS), Universiti Sains Malaysia (8 April 2025; Penang, Malaysia)

G. Le Thi Nam Huong, Assistant Director, Human Rights Division, ASEAN Secretariat

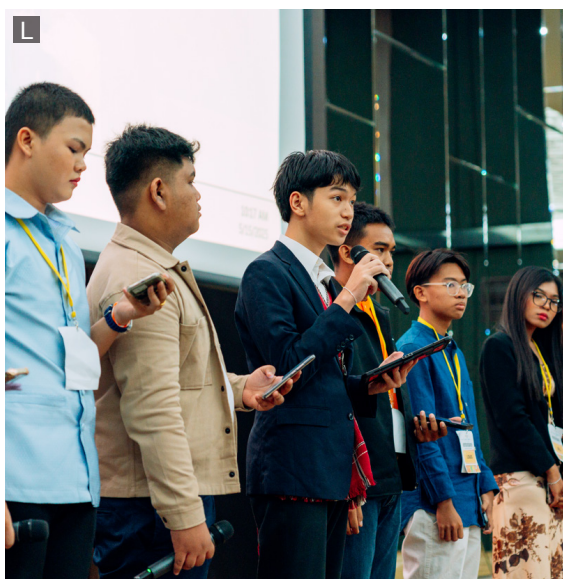
H. 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting with Australia (12 May 2025; Jakarta, Indonesia)

January to June 2025 (continued)



- I. 4<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting with Japan (13 May 2025; Jakarta, Indonesia)
- J. 1<sup>st</sup> Interface Meeting with Norway (13 May 2025; Jakarta, Indonesia)
- K. 8<sup>th</sup> Interface Meeting with the European Union (14 May 2025; Jakarta, Indonesia)

January to June 2025 (continued)



L. 2<sup>nd</sup> Interface Meeting with Child Rights Coalition Asia (including children and youth and representatives of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)) (15 May 2025; Jakarta, Indonesia)

M. 1<sup>st</sup> Interface Meeting with the Republic of Korea (16 May 2025; Jakarta, Indonesia)





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